

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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September 27, 2010

Start: 1:19pm

Recess: 6:32pm

HELD AT: Council Chambers
City Hall

B E F O R E:
ROBERT JACKSON
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

- Council Member Charles Barron
- Council Member Fernando Cabrera
- Council Member Margaret S. Chin
- Council Member Daniel Dromm
- Council Member Lewis A. Fidler
- Council Member Daniel R. Garodnick
- Council Member David G. Greenfield
- Council Member Vincent M. Ignizio
- Council Member G. Oliver Koppell
- Council Member Karen Koslowitz
- Council Member Brad S. Lander
- Council Member Jessica S. Lappin
- Council Member Stephen T. Levin

A P P E A R A N C E S

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito

Council Member Deborah L. Rose

Council Member Eric A. Ulrich

Council Member James Vacca

Council Member Albert Vann

Council Member Mark S. Weprin

Council Member Jumaane D. Williams

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Shael Suransky
Deputy Chancellor for Performance and Accountability
NYC Department of Education

Josh Thomases
Deputy Chief Schools Officer for Academics
Division of School Support and Instruction
NYC Department of Education

Ira Schwartz
Assistant Commissioner for Accountability
New York State Education Department

Michael Mulgrew
President
United Federation of Teachers

Ruben Diaz, Jr.
Borough President
The Bronx

Erin McGill
Education Policy Analyst
Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer

Micheline Edwards
Representative
Parent Action Committee from The Bronx and CEJ

Jose Gonzalez
Parent for United Friends of High Bridge and
Member, New York City Coalition for Educational
Justice

Minerva Morales
Mother
Concerned Citizen

Evelyn Feliciano
Parent, Advocate
Coalition for Educational Justice and Save Our Schools

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Tyese Edwards
Student

Leonie Haimson
Executive Director
Class Size Matters

Lisa Donlan
President
CEC 1

Donald Freeman
Retired New York City high school principal,
Representative, Time Out for Testing and Save Our
Schools

Susan Crawford
District Three parent
Founder, Right to Read Project

Rodney Dees
Parent Advocate

Everett Stembridge
Educator, parent, advocate

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2 [extended period of background
3 noise (2:24 minutes)]

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Quiet, please.

5 [gavel]

6 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Well, good
7 afternoon, everyone, and thank you for coming.
8 And welcome to today's Education Committee
9 oversight hearing on the Department of Education's
10 State Test Score Results for 2010. And before I
11 begin my opening statement, let me introduce our
12 colleagues that are present this afternoon. To my
13 right, Vincent Ignizio of Staten Island, Mark
14 Weprin of Queens, Deborah Rose of Staten Island,
15 Al Vann of the great County of Brooklyn--Kings
16 County, Danny Dromm of Queens, Karen Koslowitz of
17 Queens, Oliver Koppell of The Bronx, Margaret Chin
18 of Manhattan, Fernando Cabrera of The Bronx,
19 Jessica Lappin of Manhattan, Jimmy Vacca standing
20 of The Bronx, and Jumaane Williams of Brooklyn,
21 and Brad Lander of the great borough of Brooklyn.
22 And my name is Robert Jackson.

23 FEMALE VOICE: How come Staten
24 Island's not the "great borough."

25 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: It's always a

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2 great borough. So, in July of 2010, the New York
3 State Education Department, commonly known as SED,
4 released the latest English and math test scores
5 for students in grades three through eight
6 statewide. The new scores showed a dramatic
7 decline in the number of students who met State
8 proficiency standards. In New York City, only 42
9 percent of third to eighth grade students, passed
10 the English test this year, compared to 69 percent
11 last year, a drop of more than 26 points. In
12 math, the decrease was even larger, from a passing
13 rate of 82 percent in 2009 to 54 percent in 2010,
14 a drop of almost 28 points. Worse, the racial
15 achievement gap has actually grown, rather than
16 decrease, as we were led to believe. On the
17 English exam, the gap between black and white
18 students grew by almost ten points, while the gap
19 between Hispanic and white students widened by
20 nearly eight points since last year. Math test
21 results were even worse, as the gap doubled in one
22 year for both and black and Hispanic students. We
23 understand the test scores drop as a result of the
24 State raising the passing cutoff score. The State
25 took this action based on an analysis by Harvard

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2 researchers that found that recent year scores
3 were inflated and not a true reflection of student
4 performance. I guess we shouldn't be too
5 surprised to see that student proficiency levels
6 are much lower than the public was led to believe.
7 Overall, many respected educators, testing
8 experts, parents, advocates have been saying for
9 years that the State test scores were inflated
10 based on comparisons to the National Assessment of
11 Education Progress, commonly known as the NAEP
12 scores. Considered the nation's report card,
13 where City and State performance has remained
14 relatively flat. Many have charged that the State
15 tests have gotten easier in recent years. It was
16 reported in the press that one former teacher was
17 able to earn a Level II score on both the English
18 and math tests just by blindly filling in answers
19 without even the questions. To be fair, many of
20 the test problems are not the fault of the City of
21 New York or the State of New York. Although
22 standardized testing has been around for some
23 time, it has become increasingly more high stakes,
24 since passage of the federal No Child Left Behind
25 Act, NCLB, in 2002. The NCLB requires that

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2 schools bring all students up to proficiency
3 levels by the year 2014, or face the loss of
4 federal funds or closure. NCLB requires
5 proficiency to be measured in ELA and math, but
6 allows states to develop their own tests. That
7 means there are, there's a strong incentive for
8 states to develop tests that would make it easier
9 for them to meet the federal standards. Many
10 charge that the tests have been dumbed down, not
11 just in New York, but all over the country. But
12 just because the testing problem didn't start with
13 the State of New York or the City of New York,
14 doesn't mean they're completely off the hook. The
15 State bears tremendous responsibility for allowing
16 their testing standards to fall far below what a
17 measure of true student proficiency should be.
18 Single year pass rate increases of eight to ten
19 points are too good to be true, and should have
20 raised a red flag for State and City education
21 officials. They're also to blame for misleading
22 the public, especially students and parents, about
23 how well students were really doing. The City
24 also bears some responsibilities for making a bad
25 situation even worse. The Mayor and the

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2 Chancellor have been all over the country,
3 trumpeting the miracle of New York City student
4 progress as proof of the effectiveness of their
5 reforms, including replacing traditional schools
6 with charter schools. So what do the latest
7 scores really mean? It means that all of the
8 miracles are unmasked. It means that the
9 miraculous test score gains, like one year
10 increase of more than ten points in English, may
11 be, made by City students over the past few years,
12 was an illusion, and not a true measure of
13 progress made. It means that the miracle of a, of
14 runaway charter school success is tarnished, since
15 charter school scores dropped even more than
16 regular public schools. Now, I know that DOE is
17 going to testify today that the City students
18 really have made progress in recent years. And
19 that is true. A look at the more reliable NAEP
20 scores show that there has been some progress, but
21 very modest progress, not the huge success, the
22 gains that are claimed by this Administration.
23 The City has also taken these unreliable State
24 test scores and made them the foundation of their
25 entire accountability system, that includes

1 student promotions, school evaluations and school
2 closings, and as a factor in principal and teacher
3 evaluations, tenure and even cash bonuses. We all
4 remember what happened when school progress report
5 grades were last year, based on these fake test
6 scores. Well, I say to you, last year when 97
7 percent of schools in our City got either an A or
8 a B, now you know and I know that all of our, all
9 of our schools are not performing at an A or B
10 level. There must be some Cs and Ds and Es and
11 Fs. And so, I say to the As and Bs, that's
12 absolutely ridiculous that 97 percent of our
13 schools are getting As and Bs. And even the
14 Department of Education admitted then that they
15 had set their own progress report cut off score
16 too low. However, unlike the State, the City
17 isn't acknowledging any problems. Please get off
18 the light in the back. Off the all. Thank you.
19 Instead the Mayor and the Chancellor's statements
20 suggest that New York City students have been
21 making vast progress and vast improvements all
22 along, and continue to do well. In a press
23 release, Mayor Bloomberg stated, "This year's
24 scores maintained the major progress we have made
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2 raising student achievement levels in recent
3 years, since 2002." We've seen an ongoing trend
4 with New York City students outperforming students
5 in school districts throughout the State. Well,
6 the City is certainly not outperforming the rest
7 of the State. In the rest of the State a higher
8 percentage of students are meeting proficiency
9 standards than here in New York City. The only
10 thing it's fair to say is that the City of New
11 York students have reduced the gap with the rest
12 of the State by a few points. The Mayor even
13 called this whole testing fiasco nothing more than
14 a PR problem in one New York Times article. In
15 fact, the people I'm hearing from--parents,
16 advocates, CEC members and others--are outraged by
17 what they see as the Administration's efforts to
18 sweep under the rug or whitewash this whole
19 testing disaster. They're outraged because real
20 harm has been done, harm because we all were led
21 to believe that our kids were doing really well,
22 when they weren't. Harm to taxpayers who shelled
23 out tens of millions of dollars for bonuses that
24 may not have been earned, and more than \$100
25 million for accountability systems that so far

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2 hasn't even been, been able to give us an accurate
3 assessment of students or schools. Most of all,
4 harm to the students, many of whom were misled
5 into thinking they were proficient, when they were
6 not, who were cheated out of extra help they
7 deserved. We're just now learning more about the
8 impact of this fiasco on students. On Friday,
9 this past Friday, the press reported that almost
10 five times more elementary and middle school
11 students were held back. Over 11,000 this year
12 compared to less than 2,400 last year. Included
13 in this total are students who were originally
14 told they were promoted, only to have the decision
15 reversed, sometimes after the school year had
16 already begun. Even if your child is not
17 affected, or you don't have any children in the
18 public school system, we all should be outraged
19 because having just 42 percent of third to eighth
20 grade students meeting the State's English
21 standards is an educational crisis, and quite
22 frankly it's hard to comprehend the Mayor and the
23 Chancellor's cavalier attitude about it. This is
24 much more than a PR problem. The Chancellor sent
25 out a letter to parents about the drop in test

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2 scores in which he said that if the Department of
3 Education had the State test results earlier, more
4 students would have qualified for summer school.

5 He went on to promise that these students would
6 receive extra help during the school year.

7 However, we don't know whether that promise will
8 be kept. Considering that the State Education

9 Commissioner has granted districts around the

10 State a one-year waiver from having to provide

11 academic intervention services to additional

12 students who fail to meet the new proficiency

13 standards. More than 109,000 such students in New

14 York City, 50,000 who scored at Level I, the

15 lowest level, in addition to letting the district

16 off the hook, for providing extra help to all

17 students who qualify, the Commissioner has asked

18 the federal government for a one-year grace period

19 before schools are penalized for not having enough

20 students meet the new higher standards. But no

21 one has given students a waiver or a grace period

22 this year. Once again, students are held

23 accountable, but the system, the State Education

24 Department, and the Department of Education, are

25 not. I want to be really clear, we will not

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2 accept the answer from DOE that this is only about
3 the State of New York raising the bar. Today,
4 we'll be asking the Department of Education for an
5 explanation of their response to the drop in test
6 scores, and especially about what they plan to do
7 to help the more than 100,000 additional students
8 who failed the state test. The Committee will
9 also hear from parents, advocates, unions and
10 others regarding over DOE's testing policies and
11 recommendations for improvements in this area. In
12 addition to the Department of Education, we will
13 also hear from a State Education Department
14 official today, and I'd like to remind everyone
15 who wishes to testify today that they must fill
16 out a witness slip, which is located at the desk
17 of the Sergeant-at-Arms, which is in the front
18 over to you right, to my left of, of this
19 particular hearing room. And to allow as many
20 people as possible to testify, testimony will be
21 limited to no more than three minutes per person.
22 And now, before I introduce the Department of
23 Education officials, let me just introduce other
24 colleagues that have joined us. And I see Dan
25 Garodnick of Manhattan, would you raise your hand,

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Dan, please? Okay, Charles Barron of Brooklyn.

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Melissa Mark-Viverito of Manhattan and The Bronx;

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Melissa, would you stand up so they can see you,

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please? Council Member Lew Fidler of Brooklyn.

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David Greenfield of the great borough of Brooklyn,

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David's over here. Jimmy Vacca, I mentioned you

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earlier, okay? With that, let's move forward to

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hearing from the Department of Education

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officials, and we're going to ask them to

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introduce themselves and their title with the

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Department of Education, and then whoever would

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like to begin their testimony first, you may

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begin.

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SHAEL SURANSKY: Good afternoon,

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Chairman Jackson, my name is Shael Suransky, I'm

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Deputy Chancellor for Performance and

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Accountability.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Welcome.

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JOSH THOMASES: And I'm Josh

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Thomases, Deputy Chief Schools Officer for

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Academics, in the Division of School Support and

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Instruction.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Welcome to

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the both of you.

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JOSH THOMASES: Thank you, sir.

SHAEL SURANSKY: Thank you for inviting us this afternoon to discuss the results of the New York State Math and English Language Arts Exams, as well as the Department's ongoing efforts to address the outcomes of those exams ensure that each of our students graduates ready to go to college and move on in their careers. I'm going to begin the testimony, I'm going to read briefly from it, and then I'd like to submit the rest of it into the record, 'cause I'm just going to, in the interests of time, run through some of the data on the slides. And then Josh will take over and talk in more depth about the supports that are being put into place for the schools and the students. I began my career as a sixth grade math teacher, and I worked as an assistant principal, and then a principal of a new school in The Bronx that served recent immigrant kids. Our mission at that school was to teach kids both to meet the State standards and to prepare them for college, as well as learning English for the first time. And I am proud to say that school was very successful and continues to

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2 be successful. As I moved into my role here at
3 the Division of Performance and Accountability, I
4 continued to take those same beliefs and values
5 with me about what it takes to make kids succeed.
6 As you know, the State requires all students in
7 third through eighth grade to demonstrate mastery
8 of the State standards through an annual exam, and
9 they rate students on levels one, two, three and
10 four. This summer, the State Ed Department
11 decided to redefine what it means to pass the test
12 by making the proficiency requirements
13 significantly more demanding. And I know that Ira
14 Schwartz will go into much more detail on the
15 analysis that they did in order to make those
16 decisions. Their goal, in short, though, was to
17 make sure that their proficiency standards were in
18 line with what they believe kids need in order to
19 be ready for college. And I want to be clear that
20 we support that decision; in fact, the Mayor in
21 2006 wrote an editorial asking the State to align
22 its standards with the NAEP standards, and
23 Chancellor Klein has testified many times before
24 this Committee about the need to raise State
25 standards. Naturally, though, if you increase the

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2 score required to pass the test, fewer people will
3 pass. And while raising the bar is the right
4 thing to do, parents who have recently heard for
5 the first time that their children are not
6 performing at grade, at grade level, are
7 understandably upset and worried. We know that we
8 have much work ahead of us. At the same time,
9 it's both inaccurate and unfair to dismiss the
10 real progress our students have made over the past
11 several years. In fact, had it not been for that
12 progress, it would be hard to conceive how our
13 schools could meet this new, higher bar now. Some
14 school districts in the State now have proficiency
15 rates as low as the 20s. Thanks to the hard work
16 of our teachers, principals and students over the
17 past eight years, we're not in that position.
18 Instead, we have a strong foundation to build on.
19 I want to go into the first slide here, which kind
20 of gives you a sense of part of the State's
21 thinking, I think. If you look at this, it's not
22 a data slide from the DOE or the State, it's
23 actually economic data on what kinds of jobs are
24 available to, to kids as they go into the economy.
25 And you'll see that over the past 40 years, the

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2 kinds of jobs that people are requiring are very
3 different than what we had in 1960. There's much
4 more cognitive, non-routine work, where you have
5 to really think on your feet, be able to solve
6 problems, work collaboratively with other people.
7 And our assessments and our schools need to adjust
8 and catch up with those changes in the workforce.
9 And one of the things that Chairman Jackson, you
10 mentioned in your testimony about the quality of
11 the assessments, I think is a really important
12 point that we'll return to towards the end of our
13 testimony. But the State has been working hard
14 over the past year as part of a consortium, to
15 look at new assessments that will push on both the
16 basic skills and on the higher order skills that
17 kids are going to need in college. And I think
18 that raising the bar in terms of how many
19 questions you have to get right on the test, is
20 really just the first step, because ultimately the
21 kinds of assignments and the tasks that you ask
22 kids to do is where the real work is around
23 getting kids ready for college. So we'll come
24 back to that point, but let's just take a few
25 minutes, and I'm going to run you through the data

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2 that we've got over the past several years. So,
3 to your point, the, the State recalibrated the
4 test scores and we're not at 42 percent in English
5 and at 54 percent in math; whereas, a year ago we
6 were at 68 and 81 percent, respectively. The
7 notable thing on this slide is that in both, in
8 both versions of the cut scores, whether you use
9 the ones the State has been using, or whether you
10 retroactively apply the new cut scores back, which
11 is the green line, there has been progress. But
12 progress has been greater in math going from 31 to
13 54, if you use the new cut scores, and 36 to 42 if
14 you use the new cut scores in English. It's more,
15 if you're going to make a comparison year-to-year,
16 you really need to look also at the scale scores,
17 because the scale scores are based on how many
18 questions did a kid get right on the test, and
19 actually they're an average of all of the students
20 in the City. And so, whereas proficiency is a
21 line that can be moved, and it was moved this
22 summer, the scale score averages are actual real
23 comparisons year-to-year. And what you see on
24 this chart is that there has been increases in
25 terms of the scale score gains from 2006 to 2010,

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2 with a flattening out from 2009 to 2010 in both
3 ELA and math. The quantity of that increase is,
4 is on this chart. So you'll see that New York
5 City went up between ten and 33 points, in terms
6 of the gains on their scale scores, over this
7 period, which is in many cases double or several
8 points higher than what happened in the rest of
9 New York State. And you're correct that while the
10 rest of New York State is much more middle class
11 than New York City, less urban, their overall
12 scores for proficiency are higher, the gains that
13 our kids have made in reference to the rest of the
14 kids taking exactly the same test, are much
15 larger, which is something that we should be proud
16 of. That said, there's also real concerning news,
17 as, as you pointed out. And so, this is the data
18 breaking down current proficiency of white
19 students, Asian students, black students, Hispanic
20 students, English language learners and students
21 with disabilities. And what you see here is you
22 see an achievement gap in terms of absolute
23 proficiency, and that achievement gap is
24 unacceptable. And it's something that we've been
25 working hard to address and are deeply committed

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2 to continuing to work to address. But when you
3 look at this, it also masks some of the actual
4 gains that have been made by these same
5 populations. And so, again, we need to look at
6 what is the absolute growth in terms of scale
7 scores? How many questions were kids getting
8 right over the same period of time? So, if you
9 look at this, this is the scale score gains for
10 each of the racial groups, and you see that Black
11 and Hispanic kids made stronger gains than white
12 and Asian kids in both ELA and math. And in terms
13 of absolute scores on these tests, there was a
14 reduction in the gap. Now, that reduction leaves
15 a real gap, and that gap is unacceptable, but
16 there has definitely been progress. The gap
17 reduction in terms of scale as far as ELA is about
18 a third of the gap, and the gap reduction in terms
19 of math is about 20 percent of the gap, or about a
20 fifth of the gap. It's also worth nothing that
21 where the State set the new bar for proficiency,
22 there are many, many students who are just below
23 that line. So, for example, we did an analysis to
24 see what happens to the achievement gap if kids
25 answer a few more questions right on the test, and

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2 in math five more questions right leads to a
3 change of 16 percentage points in terms of the
4 number of black and Hispanic kids who are
5 proficient. And in ELA, it's only two questions
6 that leads to a 14 percentage point gain. Which
7 means there are a lot of kids that are just below
8 that new proficiency line, as a result of the
9 change that the State test made. As you look at
10 this data, the same pattern is born out when you
11 look at English language learners. The absolute
12 proficiency is quite low, but if you look at the
13 kinds of gains that have been made by English
14 language learners over the past four years, it's
15 much higher than the gains of the rest of the
16 City, in both ELA and math. And the same is true
17 for the gains made by kids who have disabilities:
18 a 32 point gain and a 34 point gain, for kids who
19 are special ed. That does not take away from the
20 fact that those students are our most vulnerable
21 students, and there's tremendous work to be done
22 to get them to proficiency. But, but also, I
23 don't want to cloud the fact that they have also
24 been making real progress, and the way you get
25 kids to move is by making these kinds of gains.

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2 This is exactly the pattern that we need to see,
3 in order to get to the point that we're all
4 collectively hoping for. You mentioned NAEP, and
5 I want to share that data as well. So, NAEP is a
6 national test that does a sample of about 6,000
7 kids every year in New York City, in grades four
8 and eight. And it's like a poll. They don't test
9 every kid, but they test a portion of kids that
10 are determined by the federal government to be a
11 representative sample of our population. And what
12 you see here is that there's been some real
13 progress in three of the four tested areas on
14 NAEP. We made eleven point gains in both reading
15 and math at the fourth grade level, a seven point
16 gain in math, and in eighth grade reading, there's
17 a real concern that I want to point to, because
18 we, as well as the State and the nation, have not
19 moved in that area. And one of the key reasons, I
20 think, is that NAEP really tests whether or not
21 kids are actually reading both nonfiction texts
22 and fiction texts. And current State standards
23 have not yet embedded that. And so kids have not
24 been given the exposure they need to science and
25 social studies literacy, in the early grades and

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2 in middle school, and as result you don't see that
3 kind of performance on the, the NAEP tests that
4 you need to see. One of the, the good things, the
5 same day the State raised the cut scores, they
6 also adopted new common core standards, which
7 address a lot of these issues, because what those
8 standards ask is both basic skills and skills like
9 critical thinking and the ability to do research,
10 and to defend your ideas both verbally and in
11 writing. And it specifies that literacy is not
12 just in literature, it's also in social studies
13 and science, which are skills that we really need
14 to work to build for all of our kids. That said,
15 New York's gains stand, I think, as a testament to
16 some of the progress we've made, and they far
17 outpace what happened in the rest of New York
18 State taking the same test, and as well as if you
19 look at the nation as a whole, they outpace the
20 nation as a whole. On graduation, there's a
21 measure here that we've been using over the past
22 several years, it's a orange line, it's the
23 State's definition of graduation. The green dot
24 is recently the State also began counting August
25 graduates, those are the kids who pass during

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2 summer school. The blue line is for historical
3 purposes only. We don't use that anymore for
4 accountability purposes, or for reporting our
5 graduation rates. But we do want to be able to
6 make comparisons back into the '80s. And so you
7 can see by either the old measure or the State's
8 new measure, that we've made real progress on
9 graduation rates. And I also want to note that at
10 the same time period, the discharges have
11 basically remained exactly the same, we've had 19
12 percent discharges in 2002, and we're at 19
13 percent as of last year. In terms of regent's
14 diploma, which is the new standard the State is
15 phasing in, right now kids have to pass three at
16 65 and two at 55; in the next couple years,
17 that'll be all of 'em at 65. And you see that
18 we've also seen progress in that, going from 30
19 percent of kids earning a Regent's Diploma to 44
20 percent of kids earning the Regent's Diploma.
21 Now, there's an achievement gap at high school
22 level as well. We've seen the performance of
23 black and Hispanic students improve at the high
24 school level, going from 40 to 57 percent for
25 African-American students, and 37 to 56 percent

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for Hispanic students. That's closed the gap part of the way, about five points, or closing 20 percent of the gap, and six points and 23 percent of the gap for Hispanics. Part of the reason why the gap is not closing more is that white students have also been increasing during this same period of time, and we would not want to see a result where we were closing the achievement gap as a result of one group decreasing. Just let me reemphasize, though, that having a gap that's close to 20 points in graduation rates is absolutely unacceptable, and it's something that we're deeply committed to working with you to continue to close. One of the ways we're doing that is increasing the rigor of the curriculum in the high schools, and so we've seen big jumps in the number of kids taking and passing AP exams. We also saw an increase this year on our SAT scores. And our SAT participation rate has also increased. All of these are measures that link back to college readiness, which is a central goal that the Mayor talked about this morning in his speech, and I think that we, we will comment on further in a minute. Just to give you a sense of

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2 how our kids are doing as they go into college, we
3 had in 2002 about 16,000 of our graduates going
4 into the CUNY system. That jumped in 2009 to
5 25,000. That's a huge number of kids going to
6 college that weren't going to college before. And
7 that's an accomplishment. But you also need to
8 ask the question: Are they ready for college?
9 And that's an equally important question. We
10 don't want them dropping out, we want them
11 graduating, and we want them ready for college.
12 During that same time, we've seen a decrease in
13 the remediation rate from 56 percent to 50 percent
14 at CUNY. And our weakest students go to CUNY, and
15 so we don't actually have the, the students who go
16 to SUNY and private colleges in that number, which
17 would probably bring it down somewhere into the
18 mid-30s. With that, let me close and pass to my
19 colleague Josh who's going to talk now about the,
20 the process moving forward and what we're doing to
21 support the schools.

22 JOSH THOMASES: So good afternoon,
23 Chairmen and the Education Committee. I'd also
24 like to submit my testimony formally and just talk
25 quickly to some key points so we can get to your

1
2 questions and the conversation at hand. First, a
3 quick personal history. I was a founding teacher
4 at El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice. It
5 was one of the original new vision schools founded
6 in the early 1990s. And one of the models of the,
7 what's possible when you create effective small
8 schools, and in this case deeply rooted in
9 community. I joined the Department of Education's
10 central office about six years ago. My primary
11 responsibility has been the development of new
12 small public schools, and the working with leaders
13 of those schools, replicating what we figured out
14 at El Puente, and figuring out how to disseminate
15 it citywide. Now, my current role is Deputy Chief
16 Schools Officer. I'm responsible to guide the
17 instructional work across the City. So, today, as
18 I talk about what we're doing to improve student
19 outcomes and student learning, I want to begin by
20 reiterating what Shael just said, which is that
21 we're really talking about moving the target from
22 the goal of high school diploma to the goal of
23 college and career ready. The first slide showed,
24 showed us very clearly that a high school diploma
25 simply doesn't buy anybody the lifestyle that they

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2 would want, or that we would want for our own
3 children in the 21st Century. And so as a system,
4 we're really, think, we've, we've begun pushing
5 very hard to think about how to push towards that
6 when, that a high school diploma means college and
7 career ready. That is no easy task. So just to
8 give you a sense of how we've started pushing
9 that, Shael quickly referred to the common core
10 State standards. We began by, by sharing them
11 citywide with our superintendents and network
12 leaders early last spring. And, and the reason
13 why, as Shael pointed to, is it really points to
14 the kinds of tasks that students need to do. And
15 he provided one example, I'll provide one other.
16 In general, mo--our students spend way too much
17 time K to 12, writing narrative stories about
18 their own personal experiences. And, and when
19 they get to college, they're not asked about their
20 personal experiences. They're asked to read
21 complicated texts, analyze them, make an argument
22 and use evidence to defend that argument. And so
23 when we talk about the common core State
24 standards, what we really mean is digging into
25 what it would look like if students were doing

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2 that in early elementary school and through high
3 school. And it obviously looks very different in
4 early elementary school, it's about reading a
5 grade level text and understanding it, and being
6 able to explain it, the who, what, when, where,
7 why, how of New York Times articles or Daily News
8 articles from all of our elementary school
9 experiences. But now going to much more
10 complicated text, and what most of our high
11 schools engage in at this point. And that's the
12 real challenge that it brings. And so, we use
13 that, knowing that the State's assessment system
14 is not yet fully developed on it, and knowing that
15 that's an enormous task to move the system from
16 the, the standards that we have now, towards
17 college and career ready for every student. We
18 began looking at those standards first with our
19 superintendents and network leaders, and then over
20 the summer launched it with all the principals in
21 the City, and select people by the principals in
22 each school, the assistant principals and teacher
23 leadership. And each school, depending on where
24 they're at, depending on how effective they've
25 been, is engaging in with it somewhat differently.

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2 But they're all looking at what it would mean to
3 move for the school they're at, the grade level
4 they're at, the, what their success to date, where
5 are they currently at towards better preparing
6 students college and career ready. The second
7 piece that we're, that I think frames the answer
8 to what we're doing around student outcomes, is
9 around an expanded partnership both with CUNY, but
10 with organizations around the City that do work
11 with young people, to figure out how to get them
12 successful in college, and to bridge that gap.
13 And one of the key things that we have, and it's
14 at this point still unique, but a model that is
15 being shared nationwide, we have a data sharing
16 agreement with CUNY. So, the first time, we're no
17 longer relying on anecdotes for how kids do once
18 they graduate. It's not just the kids who come
19 back and talk to the guidance counselor or talk to
20 the principal. We now know how our students do,
21 how many of them persist for how long, how do they
22 do in terms of students entering remediation
23 versus students not entering remediation? And
24 it's both, that data has allowed schools to both
25 acknowledge their success and seed very deeply the

1 challenges that they need to take on. And in that
2 context, I'm proud to announce today, and the
3 Mayor mentioned it this morning, the Bill and
4 Melinda Gates Foundation and the National League
5 of Cities has awarded New York City a \$3 million
6 grant to boost college completion rates. And
7 we're looking to launch both, as the New York City
8 Department of Education in partnership with City
9 University of New York, and local partners ranging
10 the gamut from Coalition for Educational
11 Injustice, to New Visions for Public Schools, to
12 the Youth Development Institute and many others,
13 Graduate NYC, the college readiness and success
14 initiative. And the goal is to double the
15 graduation rates for Associate Degree programs
16 within ten years. Concretely, what are we going
17 to work on? And \$3 million is a, is a drop in the
18 bucket to pull this off, it's going to require the
19 combined resources of all the money we already
20 have, is aligned academic standards across high
21 school and into college, so that what students do
22 in high school directly correlates to what's
23 happening when they go to take their remedial
24 course and their English 101 courses. Approved
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2 academic advisement and counseling, both within
3 the schools, but within the communities and CBOs
4 and other organizations that work with parents and
5 families to help advise students on where they're
6 going. And concrete things, like let's make sure
7 every student correctly fills out the FAFS
8 application, the financial aid application, so
9 that they can actually get their financial aid.
10 Strengthening the data system, it's a, it's a very
11 good start, but it can get better, and engaging
12 parents and families across the City on the
13 initiative. And finally, just one other example
14 is, is partnerships between the Department, the
15 City University and private partners. Today the
16 Mayor announced a partnership with IBM, where
17 students who, in the nine to 14 school, focused on
18 computer science, who graduate and pass the
19 certification exam, would be first in line for
20 jobs at IBM, that pay entry essentially into the
21 middle class in America. So those are the big
22 pictures that frames the work that, that then gets
23 to very school specific, if we're asking a
24 question. So what's a school doing in response to
25 moving this standard from high school diploma to

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2 college and career ready, and in the context of
3 the State raising the bar? And there are a couple
4 key things. The first is teacher teams. The,
5 the, across the educational spectrum there is
6 fairly clear agreement that having teams of
7 teachers meeting consistently, talking about the
8 work that they're doing with their students, and
9 figuring out what they need to change to better
10 their practice, is the most sure way to, to change
11 educational practice in schools. And we have made
12 that the, the centerpiece of our reform agenda.
13 So that it's not about me or Shael or anybody at
14 Central telling 80,000 teachers what they should
15 teach, but it's about teams of teachers looking at
16 their students' data, which is both the test
17 scores and the kinds of work that the students do
18 in classes, they're the essays they write, the
19 math problems they solve, and figuring out what
20 they need to learn how to do better. When we
21 launched this several years ago, we started with a
22 team, one team in every school. We're not at the
23 point where the vast, vast majority of teachers
24 will be in teams by, by the midpoint of this year.
25 Second is, is extra supports for, for students,

1 particularly inside the school day, and to the
2 degree to which we have moneys for after school
3 and before school, after school and before school.
4 We're obviously focusing on the students who
5 either fell below the proficiency line, the new
6 proficiency line, and those parents and families
7 who are coming to your offices, concerned about
8 what's happening with their child, and also
9 students who dropped. They may even remain above
10 proficiency, but last year they thought of
11 themselves as growing at a level four, and now
12 there may be a midlevel three. So what does this
13 mean concretely, I'll give you just two concrete
14 examples. PS 93 in Brooklyn, our network based
15 coordinator of early intervention services, has
16 been training in the content area teachers at the
17 elementary school, in early intervention services,
18 so that when they go into teach social studies or
19 science, they're also going in to do early
20 intervention support, so that it's a line to the
21 other work that the school is doing. Or another
22 example, at PS 310 in The Bronx, every struggling
23 student in that school gets a pupil intervention
24 plan. That is the teacher documents every couple
25

1 weeks a couple sentences. What's the student
2 working on? What's the need the student has? How
3 they're working on it with the student, and what's
4 going to be the evidence that the student's
5 progressing? And this is a document that sits in
6 a binder for each student that in that school the
7 parent goes in and can meet with the, the--and
8 say, "Let me see the student, the work my student,
9 my child is doing." And the teachers, across
10 different subject areas, can also say, "Well,
11 what's the work you're doing and what's the work
12 I'm doing, and let's make sure it overlays."
13 Schools are sharing those plans as we speak with
14 their school leadership teams, with their
15 parent/teacher associations, and with individual
16 parents over the course of September and October,
17 so that every child knows and every family knows
18 what's the work that's going to happen to support
19 their individual, that individual child over the
20 course of this year to meet that higher standard.
21 Finally, I want to call out a couple pilots that
22 relate to his work, in terms of figuring out how
23 to game change the work in the City. I'm sure
24 you're familiar, so I won't spend much time of it,
25

1
2 on it. The phase one special education reform,
3 which is focused on 245 schools, and particularly
4 focused on making sure that special education
5 students get the support they need, so that they
6 can meet the raise bar. It's not about lowering
7 the bar for them, it's about supporting them to
8 meet that raise bar. Second, the Mayor spoke to
9 this this morning, but we have our innovation
10 pilots that are particularly focused on
11 personalized instruction. That it's no longer
12 about one teacher sitting in front of a classroom
13 of 25 or 22 or 30 students and doing a lesson
14 geared to the whole class. But that each of our
15 children need partic--have particular needs, and
16 that we can now organize schools to meet those
17 needs differently, using technology and using some
18 of the other things we've learned over the past
19 decade. The common core assessment pilots are
20 developing our school based assessments that would
21 reflect these com--new common core State
22 standards, so we can compare across the City,
23 what's the kind of work that a student in fifth
24 grade or seventh grade should be doing that has
25 matched to the common core, and how do schools

1
2 assess and evaluate whether or not the students
3 are meeting that. And finally, our teacher
4 effectiveness pilots are focusing on strengthening
5 both teacher support and teacher evaluation, so
6 that we get the best teacher possible in every
7 classroom. The race to the top work, the award
8 that New York State was granted, and we're
9 obviously working with New York State on it, will
10 support much of this work. We've made great
11 strides in the City, and we have schools across
12 the City that demonstrate what we all know in this
13 room to be true, which is that all of our children
14 can learn and perform at the highest levels.

15 These schools show us that we can close the
16 achievement gap, because they've already done so.
17 And again, I'll provide two examples. Both
18 schools, predominately black and Latino, almost
19 entirely Title I, significant numbers of English
20 language learners and special education. And both
21 schools, Manhattan Village Academy on the high
22 school level, and PS 172 in Brooklyn on the
23 elementary school level, have nine out of, more
24 than nine out of ten of their students graduating
25 with a Regent's Diploma for high school or at the

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2 new proficiency level, even given the raised bar
3 at elementary school. The fact that any school
4 can do it means that every school should, and
5 that's our work. I know that across the City,
6 parents and students are struggling to make sense
7 of the new standards, and that you are likely
8 hearing frustration and surprise from
9 constituents. This isn't easy and I do not want
10 to in any way minimize or underestimate the
11 challenge for students or families. At the same
12 time, we've shown it's possible that for a large
13 urban school district to change the graduation
14 rate and to begin to close the achievement gap,
15 that it was stagnant for decades. So now we must
16 build on that progress while aiming towards this
17 new higher goal, which is ensuring that every
18 graduate, every student graduates college and
19 career ready. Achieving that goal will require
20 all of us working together. Our students, our
21 parents, our teachers, principals, our
22 communities, and our civic and political
23 leadership. Our students are counting on us to
24 help them prepare them for higher learning,
25 rewarding careers and bright futures. We must not

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2 let them down, and we're here to tell you today
3 we're committed to that work. So with that, we
4 look forward to your questions. Thank you,
5 Chairman.

6 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Well, let me
7 thank both you, the Deputy Chief of Office for
8 Academics, and the Deputy Superintendent for
9 coming in and, and sharing your history as far as
10 the Department of Education is concerned, and what
11 position you're in now, and in speaking about test
12 scores for 2010. I did not share with you my
13 history, and I'm going to do that in one minute,
14 and so you know where I'm coming from. I was born
15 and raised in New York City. I went to all public
16 schools, and I went to SUNY New Paltz. And I
17 became a parent activist when my oldest daughter
18 in 1980 went to school. And I was involved in
19 that parents association for 20 continuous years.
20 And I was a member of Community School Board Six
21 for 15 years, and School Board Six started the
22 Campaign for Fiscal Equity. So I'm a parent
23 advocate, fighting for parents, more so than
24 fighting for the Administration. Let me just say
25 that to you. So you know where I'm coming from.

1

JOSH THOMASES: Yes, sir.

2

3

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. And

4

with that, let me just identify other colleagues

5

that are here: Eric Ulrich, where are you, Eric,

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stand up so we can see you, from Queens. And who

7

else is here? Where's Steve Levin, Steve, Steve

8

Levin, our colleague from Brooklyn was here, he's,

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he stepped out, he's coming back. And now let me

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turn to our colleague for the first question,

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questioning Mark Weprin of Queens, then we go to

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Council Member Charles Barron, then Council Member

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David Greenfield of Brooklyn.

14

COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Thank you,

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Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen, Mr. Suransky, Mr.

16

Thomases, thank you for being here. As long as

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we're doing histories, let me just give you a

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quick history of me on, on--I grew up in New York

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City, I went to New York City public schools, and

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I took standardized tests. I do remember that

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before we took the standardized tests, the only

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test prep I got was the day before the teacher

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would say, "Tomorrow, bring two number two

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pencils." [background noise: "That's right."]

25

That was my test prep. I didn't get test prep

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2 homework, I didn't get--and it was for generally
3 two days a year, one for English, one for math.

4 Are you aware that some students spend 18 days
5 doing standardized tests in New York City schools?
6 In the course of a year.

7 MALE VOICE: [off mic] Four months.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Including
9 interim assessments. It's approximately 18 days
10 for some students. That's a tenth of their school
11 year, taking standardized tests. In addition,
12 they spend weeks sometimes before those
13 standardized tests, frozen with doing tests prep
14 and learning how to get the right answers on the
15 test. In addition, they spend, get homework, test
16 prep homework. I don't ever remember that being a
17 subject when I was a kid. We had English
18 homework, I had science homework, math homework.
19 My kids get test prep homework, and they get it
20 more than any other subject. And my thing is
21 that, when I found out the test scores, the
22 standards were not as high as we originally
23 thought, I'll be honest with you, I wasn't, I
24 didn't really care, it didn't bother me, because
25 I've always rejected the premise that these tests

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2 are accurate assessments of how students are doing
3 in the first place, and more importantly, are not
4 a good assessment of how teachers are doing. And
5 the problem with all this standardized tests, in
6 addition to being way too many, is that we're
7 using them to judge the wrong people. Those
8 tests, as they were when I was young, should be
9 used to just judge how are students doing. The
10 problem is parents want to know, "Is my child
11 learning?" and because the emphasis has changed
12 and moved to teachers, principals, buildings, a
13 Chancellor and a Mayor, there is now a focus on
14 trying to make sure the kids do as well as
15 possible on that test, and not necessarily learn
16 the information they need to succeed in life. Do
17 you agree with that statement?

18

 SHAEL SURANSKY: Well, here, here's
19 where I agree with you. I think that you want the
20 tasks that kids are working on to be real tasks
21 that are authentic, and that lead to real
22 learning, the kind of learning that would prepare
23 a kid for college. And so, the example that Josh
24 spoke about in terms of the pilots that we're
25 doing, and--

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COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Right.

SHAEL SURANSKY: --the work that the State is working on, is designing assessments so that, look at both basic skills, you want to know, can kids do the basic operations? Can kids read? You also want to know the deeper skills. And I think that, you know, to your point about the amount of test prep, one of the controls that we've put in place, 'cause actually that's a kneejerk reaction that occurs in places where there isn't strong enough leadership, and there's isn't strong enough teachers. But we, we have a quality review which I think you may have been familiar with. And the first thing that we look at is we go into classrooms. So my team goes into over 5,000 classrooms each year, and what we look at is, is the curriculum engaging the kids? Is it developing habits of mind, like critical thinking? Is it teaching kids in a way that's differentiated, so it actually meets their needs? And we're holding schools accountable for doing that. And so if there are schools that are going to a shortcut, like test prep, which may occur in some places, I would say that, that is, that is a

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2 challenge that we need to work on together, but
3 that is not actually the norm of what we're seeing
4 in most of our schools, it's just not.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: You, you--

6 SHAEL SURANSKY: And we see over
7 5,000 classrooms a year. And I would challenge
8 you to prove that it is the norm, 'cause it may,
9 it may be in some people's experience. But we
10 have amazing educators in our schools, and amazing
11 teachers, who have been doing real deep projects
12 with kids, that really push their thinking in
13 meaningful ways. And so I just don't think it's a
14 fair characterization of what's happening in the
15 schools, and it's not based on the evidence that
16 we're seeing.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Well, I, I
18 then would respectfully disagree with your
19 evidence, only 'cause, I mean, I haven't been in
20 5,000 schools, or all over the City, but I've been
21 in schools in Queens and in other parts of the
22 City, and I would say 99 percent of the schools I
23 speak to, the principals and the teachers when
24 asked privately, will say "We're doing way too
25 much test prep." And the problem is, is that

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2 they're using it, the scores, to judge the, to
3 judge the students. And I'm talking, I represent
4 a district that does pretty well in school, does
5 pretty well on those scores, but the teachers,
6 third grade teachers, for instance, are told,
7 told, they tell kids, if you run out of time on
8 the test, to guess "C" as the answer, and Columbia
9 Teachers College, by the way, is telling them
10 this, too, to put "C" as the answer, to guess. So
11 I wonder to myself, I asked my son that when he
12 came home, I said, "Why, why is he guessing at
13 all?" 'Cause it's going to give us, either he's
14 going to get 'em all right, and I'm going to think
15 he's a genius, or he's going to get 'em all wrong,
16 and I think he's a dummy. And neither one is
17 right. The reason they're guessing is 'cause
18 maybe they'll get a couple right, and Mrs. Brown
19 and the principal and the Chancellor and the Mayor
20 will look a little bit better, 'cause they got
21 three more answers right. And, and that's the
22 problem, is that they're not worrying about the
23 kid, I mean, I don't to say at all, but the
24 emphasis is not on, is the kid really learning
25 more, or can we make the school look better?

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2 SHAEL SURANSKY: The part of, part
3 of the goal of these new assessments is that
4 they're not bubble tests. And so it's not the
5 kind of assessment that you can guess on. It's
6 writing a research paper. And being able to go
7 and look at two texts and compare and analyze
8 them. And being able to take a math problem
9 that's got unfamiliar--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: DBQs.

11 SHAEL SURANSKY: --things about it-
12 -well, DBQs are very short versions of the kind of
13 performance tests that are being envisioned. But
14 they are, you're right, I mean, New York State,
15 when it's look at nationally, is often said to be
16 in the top third of the State tests, even though
17 the, the calibration raised the standard before
18 that. Our alignment with the NAEP was in the top
19 third by the NCES statistics. And because there
20 are a lot of essay questions and DBQ type
21 questions on the test, I think your, your larger
22 point, though, about accountability and should we
23 be judging schools, and should we be judging
24 teachers on how much kids are learning, it's, it's
25 a legitimate question, and I think that we might

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2 honestly disagree. I think that it's important to
3 measure whether or not schools are adding value,
4 and whether kids are actually learning, because
5 for decades we've had real neglect in parts of the
6 City, where kids have not been exposed to what
7 they need, and kids have not been learning, and
8 it's been okay. And it's been comfortable for the
9 adults to let it be okay.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Mm-hmm.

11 SHAEL SURANSKY: And one of the
12 commitments of this Administration is to really
13 ask this question, "Are kids learning? And if
14 they're not, why not? And what can we do to
15 change that?"

16 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Thank you,
17 Mr. Suransky, Mr. Chairman wants me to wrap up.

18 SHAEL SURANSKY: Okay.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: There's one
20 last statement I want to make, because I mean I go
21 to, like I say, I go to a lot of schools in Queens
22 in my area. And there's no doubt in my mind that
23 those kids over the last eight years have been
24 learning less, because they've been obsessing
25 about standardized tests. And I can ask any

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2 parent that I see, and they agree with me, they're
3 learning less geography, science, history, getting
4 less arts and music, physical education, they even
5 have gym teachers who were out grading tests so
6 they don't even have gym that day. So, you're not
7 looking if you don't realize this. I'm telling
8 you, this is happening. I know you go to all
9 these schools. I see it every day, locally, and
10 that's what's happening in these schools, and
11 that's eight years that my kids and the other kids
12 out there, have been learning less. And I just
13 feel we can't get those eight years back. Thank
14 you.

15 SHAEL SURANSKY: Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.

17 Council Member Charles Barron of Brooklyn.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: You know,
19 this is incredible. It's incredible, it's
20 incredible, I can't believe that you can actually
21 come here, fail, having failed, and then put some
22 charts up there, now it's not the standardized
23 test, now you're going to go into cut scores and
24 scale scores, and if they were to ask, answered a
25 few more questions right, we would've been right

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2 there. Y'all are ridiculous. Y'all are
3 ridiculous. You've failed, you fail--and Council
4 Member Weprin is correct, everybody knows they do
5 test prep, I don't care how many schools you
6 visit, if you visited 5,000 schools and most of
7 them don't do test prep, then they lied to you or
8 you're lying to us. Because that's what they do.
9 Test prep. Turns it into test taking mills. I
10 don't really have a question for you, because I
11 think you got a chart to answer it. The bottom
12 line is you failed us. And because this, the, the
13 standard of the tests were raised, you failed our
14 children, and you're failing our children because
15 you're not listening to people who know how to
16 educate our children. You're not listening to
17 those of us who said, "Stop playing the charter
18 school game, and taking money out of public
19 schools for the public charter schools." You're
20 not listening to those of us who said we needed
21 culturally relevant curriculum. You're not
22 listening to us who have said we need recreation,
23 we need art, we need them to learn about the green
24 economy, learn about languages, and learn about
25 science, and art and all of these other things.

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2 You're not listening to us when we say lower the
3 class sizes. You're not listening to us when we
4 say put in more paraprofessionals in the school so
5 that they can help teachers teach. You're not
6 listening to us when we said the teacher needs to
7 hire, principal needs to hire a business manager
8 so they can teach teachers how to teach, and not
9 have to deal with all the paperwork they do as a
10 principal. I know that 'cause my wife was a
11 principal, and I missed her at night, this was
12 personal. [laughter] So, we know that you have
13 failed, and I think that we should continue in
14 this City to say that the failure of this system
15 is because we have Mayoral control, a Mayor who
16 knows nothing about controlling education.
17 [applause] The failure of this system is we have
18 a Chancellor that needs to be fired. No, no
19 corporate head can come with this, these
20 statistics and keep their job. Anybody else would
21 be fired. Chancellor has to go, and I know y'all
22 get paid to come here and make failure look like a
23 success, but you failed. And the CUNY students
24 [laughter] even though the, the Speaker took my
25 Chair as Chair if Higher Ed, I'm still the

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2 people's Chair of the Higher Education Committee,
3 and I know the 6,000 students that come out of
4 your system and go to CUNY can't go to the four
5 year colleges, they have to go to the two year
6 colleges, not that that's a horrible thing, and
7 get remediation, 'cause they not prepared for
8 higher education, and many of the presidents of
9 CUNY colleges complain and were irate that the
10 Chancellor Matthews sat with Chancellor Klein and
11 said how great the students were coming into CUNY.
12 So, I don't have a question for you, I just wanted
13 to make that statement, 'cause ain't nothing we
14 can say that they're not going to fix up, lie, or
15 put some statistics or some colorful chart up
16 there to make you think what really happened
17 didn't happen. [laughter] You failed us, you
18 failed us, and the Chancellor needs to go.

19 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you,
20 Council Member Barron. Council Member Vincent
21 Ignizio of Staten Island, followed by Council
22 Member David Greenfield of Brooklyn.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: Yes, thank
24 you very much. I mean, I just have one basic
25 question, and, and this Council is very unified in

1
2 terms of demographics, in terms of all five
3 boroughs, in terms of political views across the
4 spectrum. I have one question that dovetails on
5 my friend Charles Barron's statement, if you will.
6 And that is this Council said to Department of
7 Education that we have a potential education
8 emergency, and yet the one person in this City
9 who's responsible for the education of our kids,
10 is not sitting at that table. Where is the
11 Chancellor today and why isn't he here talking
12 about this, why are you? [applause]

13 SHAEL SURANSKY: If, if I could
14 respectfully respond to both statements, one I
15 think that if you request to meet with the
16 Chancellor, I'm sure that the, you can discuss
17 that with him. We're the two people who are
18 responsible, one, for helping him to lead the
19 Department of Education around these issues, and
20 have a lot of the details. But if--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: But
22 respectfully, sir, you're not the Chancellor,
23 though.

24 SHAEL SURANSKY: That's - - '

25 COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: Okay, the

1
2 Chancellor is appointed by the Mayor, and the
3 Mayor clearly can't be in here, he allows somebody
4 to run his Department of Education, that is the
5 Chancellor of the City of New York. This Council,
6 which has legislative authorization to oversight
7 of the agency, is saying we believe there's an
8 education emergency. And for him not to be here
9 and say "You're wrong and here's why you're
10 wrong," I think is an offense to this body. And
11 that's just the statement, or question, I want to
12 say. Where is he? Why isn't he here? And I
13 think it's offensive to this body that he's not
14 here representing this, this Education Department.
15 [applause]

16 SHAEL SURANSKY: Just, if I could,
17 a couple points I were made earlier that weren't
18 accurate, one, the number of our teachers has
19 actually increased over the last several years in
20 our schools, and if you look at, there was a
21 statement that kids only go to two year colleges,
22 half of our kids going to CUNY, are going to four
23 year colleges. Any school in the City, if they
24 want to, can hire a business manager, in order to
25 support the principals, schools have the autonomy

1
2 to do that. And frankly the, the decision to
3 focus on science or art or a green economy topics
4 is a decision that any school can make, and many
5 schools do make. And finally, on charter schools,
6 there's a legitimate debate in the City around
7 that, but there are thousands and thousands of
8 parents that are voting with their feet, and are
9 interested in using that option, and I don't think
10 we should deny them.

11 JOSH THOMASES: And, and then if I
12 may, Chairman. We'll just add that the, the
13 challenge of what it's going to take to take our
14 schools from where they currently are, to
15 graduating college and career ready, is, is not
16 one that we're pretending doesn't exist. Or to
17 say it another way, that challenge exists, we can
18 call it a crisis, it's not a new crisis, the
19 crisis existed 20 years ago, the crisis existed 30
20 years ago, the crisis existed when I was in public
21 education in Brooklyn. Right? So it's not, it's
22 not a new crisis. We have made progress. The
23 fact that we've made progress doesn't change the
24 fact that we're only graduating 63 percent. The
25 fact that 63 percent is better than 50 percent, is

1
2 maybe worth a small pat on the back, but then
3 there's enormous work to do, 'cause it still means
4 that four in ten children aren't graduating high
5 school, let alone graduating college and career
6 ready. So, so, I do, and Councilman Ignizio, I
7 don't want to say that, that the invitation to
8 allow the Chancellor to come is, is, as Shael
9 said, he would, he'll come if you invite him. But
10 what I would offer is, is that the fact that, the
11 fact that we're here, is not meant to, in any way,
12 suggest that we don't, that we're not taking very
13 seriously the severity of the task ahead. If
14 we're going to have a high, have a school system
15 in the City, that graduates kid ready for, ready
16 for careers, that my children are in. Right, or
17 about to be in, actually, frankly.

18 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Director, we
19 appreciate your response. The bottom line I think
20 that Councilman Ignizio was saying, because we are
21 in a crisis, that we should not have to ask him to
22 be here, that in fact an oversight hearing on the
23 2010 test scores, where over 109,000 students are
24 now been basically, their overall scores have
25 dropped, that should've automatically told him

1
2 that this is his priority. I understand that
3 there's a national conference going on, I think at
4 NBC, which the Mayor I believe spoke at this
5 morning. And that's important, too. But you've
6 heard the saying, all politics are local.
7 Education is local here today, and this the
8 priority, in our opinion. So, we differ on that,
9 and we should not have to invite him. We invited
10 the Department of Education to this hearing, in my
11 opinion, this should've been his top priority.
12 But you know one thing? We disagree on that. But
13 obviously it's been said not by me as a Chair,
14 it's been said by my colleague, who is not a
15 Democrat, he's a Republican! But it doesn't
16 matter if you're Democrat, Republican,
17 Conservative or Independent, we're talking about
18 the education of our children. That's the most
19 important thing. Well, let me just acknowledge
20 before I turn over to our colleague from Brooklyn,
21 we have in the audience Jeffrey Aubry, Assembly
22 Member from the great Borough of Queens sitting in
23 the back there. Co--And Council Member
24 Greenfield, you have the floor.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Thank

1
2 you. You know, I appreciate you coming out here
3 today. As you may know, I'm actually the newest
4 member of the City Council. I enjoy saying that
5 because in November, there's going to be a new
6 member, so I'm trying to squeeze it in as much as
7 I can.

8 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: [laughs]

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: You
10 know, I, you know, I want to be clear, I don't, I
11 don't think you guys are, are evil, and I do
12 appreciate you coming out here, and I know you're
13 trying, you're trying your best. So, I just have
14 sort of some more simplistic questions, as one of
15 the newer members, perhaps. You know, I, I like
16 pizza. I don't know if you like pizza, I'm a big
17 fan of pizza, and pizza generally costs me around
18 \$2 a slice, right? Now, if I'm always paying \$2 a
19 slice for pizza, and suddenly the cost of my pizza
20 goes up to \$3 a slice, I'm going to be pretty
21 frustrated, right? So, essentially, your response
22 to me, if you're the pizza manufacturer, would be,
23 "Well, you still have \$2, right?" I acknowledge
24 that I still have \$2, right, you know, the scores
25 are what they are, and the, the improvements may

1
2 have, may be similar, although the numbers sort of
3 have changed. Right, but the cost of the slice of
4 pizza has gone up, right. So, I cannot purchase a
5 slice of pizza now for \$2, I have to spend \$3 and
6 I'm missing that one dollar. So, in comparison I
7 think to what we're doing over here is, right, the
8 grades have gone down, which means the children
9 are now failing, which means that parents are very
10 frustrated. So, do you sort of understand where
11 we're coming from, like why we're frustrated,
12 what's sort of going on? Did you know this was
13 coming down the pike? And what was sort of your
14 plan, you know, once this was, once the change was
15 happening, I imagine you guys probably had a
16 pretty good sense that if you're going to raise
17 the bar, you know, more people are going to be
18 below the bar. So, what was sort of the, the
19 background and the discussion and sort of the
20 plan, to clarify this issue, considering the fact
21 that I still want pizza and I only have \$2 and I
22 can't buy my slice.

23 JOSH THOMASES: So, Councilman,
24 just to reiterate, we began the work on moving
25 towards a different standard before the State test

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2 scores came out, before the State tests were even
3 given in June, let alone before the, the cut score
4 was created, that--in my testimony I spoke about
5 the work that began in the spring, with
6 superintendents and network leaders, and then
7 moved to principals and teachers over the summer.
8 I think the, the absolutely understand, as I said,
9 the, the frustration and the, the challenges that
10 parents and families, they left in June, they
11 thought their child was doing okay, the, the
12 teachers generally gave passing marks for students
13 who they thought were going to pass the class
14 based on, on the previous year's test scores, and
15 then so there are students who got, at a, I was at
16 a town hall meeting in Brooklyn a couple weeks ago
17 and there were students who got 75s in their
18 classes, and then ended up not doing, not doing
19 well enough on the test to go ahead. And the, the
20 mother legitimately asked, "I don't understand,
21 how can I get a 75, and--how can my child get a 75
22 and then not pass the test? What's the
23 disconnect?" So that is the challenge, the work
24 that was being done was looking at the common core
25 State standards and beginning to have schools look

1
2 at, are you--to the meaningful test, to the test
3 prep issue--are you doing meaningful work that's
4 doing the kinds of complicated thinking and the
5 kinds of complicated reading and writing that get
6 to diff--and math, that get to different outcomes?
7 Or are you not? And, and there are, look there
8 are effective schools in the City where a teacher
9 knows now what they're going to be teaching in
10 October, and are going to adapt and adopt it to
11 meet the needs of their children. And there are
12 schools in the City where all the teachers are
13 going home tonight, and planning what they're
14 going to do tomorrow. And we, and, and our job,
15 frankly, is to get to a point where regardless of
16 what school you go to in the City, that you have,
17 the teachers know what the plan is, that they've
18 worked on it together, that it's meeting the
19 students where they're at, and moving towards the
20 higher bar. So the work around the common core
21 State standards, the work around different high
22 schools around looking at post-secondary
23 readiness, the conversations with school
24 communities around, "Is our curriculum where it
25 needs to be? Is the work that's going to be

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2 done?" The, the work right now, with teams of
3 teachers looking at, so what's happening for these
4 children? Why did they fall behind on the tests?
5 What were the questions that they didn't answer?
6 Doing the kind of, what's called item analysis,
7 which basically means looking at the different
8 questions and seeing what it surfaces about where
9 the student's struggling. Are they struggling
10 with decoding? Are they struggling with
11 comprehension and the like? That's, that is the
12 work we've done, and we, we, we've said to school
13 leaders and, that, that this fall they should be
14 able to answer the question of any parent who
15 walks in, who says, "What are you doing different
16 for my child to get to a different outcome?" And
17 that's not easy work in a City as large as this
18 one, with the, with the numbers that we had even
19 before the proficiency standards. And it's not
20 easy work now. But it is work we are seriously
21 engaged in.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: I, I
23 understand the work that you're doing, and I
24 actually appreciate the work that you're doing to
25 try to raise the standards and make more students

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2 college ready. But my question, my question is,
3 did you not anticipate sort of the frustration
4 that we would have? That, that the parents would
5 have? That the teaches would have? That, you
6 know, the average citizen, right? I mean, so
7 let's just think about what you're saying, right,
8 you did all the back work and you did what was
9 necessary to raise the standards, and I think
10 that's great, right, I mean we all agree higher
11 standards are better, and we want kids prepared
12 for college, and that's all good. But back to my
13 original question was, did, did you not understand
14 the frustration that we would have in terms of the
15 average citizen? Was there not an attempt to try
16 to clarify or to try to get the information out
17 there, to try to explain to parents or to
18 teachers, you know, what, what was happening, I
19 mean, that's, that's really sort of the crux of my
20 question. Because when you turn to us and we say,
21 "Hey, you know, we understand your frustration,"
22 I'm not sure you really understand the
23 frustration, right, because it's impossible to
24 get, I imagine, for the typical parent, it's
25 impossible to get the Chancellor on the phone.

1
2 It's pretty easy to get me as a Councilman on the
3 phone, right. And so when a parent call, calls me
4 up and they're yelling and screaming at me, right,
5 for something that even we found out about a
6 little bit later in the game, my original question
7 becomes, you know, if you anticipated this
8 happening, which clearly you did because you did
9 all the back work--and rightfully so, and I
10 commend you for doing that, and I think it was
11 important--did you not anticipate sort of the
12 backlash or the frustration for the pizza lovers
13 who now only have \$2 bucks when the slice of pizza
14 went up to \$3?

15 SHAEL SURANSKY: I think part of
16 the challenge here was that this isn't a decision
17 that was in our control. We didn't decide when to
18 do it, and we didn't decided how to roll it out,
19 and we didn't decide what the change would be.
20 And so, that makes it difficult to prepare people.
21 We were, as soon as we had the information, we
22 were very forthcoming with it, and within two
23 weeks parents had [off mic] the information
24 available online. Unfortunately, [on mic] schools
25 were already closed. I'm, you know, if you were

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2 asking me "What would I have done if I had been
3 sitting in the State Education Department?" I
4 might've approached it a little differently. I
5 agree with the decision to raise standards, but
6 doing it a month after school closed, two months
7 after the tests were taken, has been really
8 challenging.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: I want
10 to just, to ask one more quick question. And that
11 is, specifically discussing the, the--the
12 black/white, Hispanic/white gap that we have, in
13 the City, right. So, I think you guys are doing a
14 lot of, clearly a lot of impressive stuff to try
15 to raise the bar for those who are actually
16 graduating, to ensure their success, their success
17 in college. But the numbers are still pretty
18 staggering, right, I mean, you know, you have
19 basically a one in two chance of not graduating
20 high school if you're a minority, far worse if
21 you're disabled, and far worse if you're ELL.
22 What specifically are you folks doing to try to
23 close that gap?

24 JOSH THOMASES: So, we, we could be
25 here all afternoon in this conversation, you and

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2

I. Maybe we could have a cup of coffee

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afterwards. I think the, the, to give you just a

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couple examples.

5

COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Well,

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It's the holiday of Sukkot, so as long as we can

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find a Sukkot close by, we can have the coffee.

8

[laughter]

9

JOSH THOMASES: Happy to sit in

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there with you.

11

COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: I'd be

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happy to do so.

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JOSH THOMASES: The, so just to

14

give you the--

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COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: If not,

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you're welcome to join me in Brooklyn, we'd be

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happy to have you there.

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JOSH THOMASES: Okay. The, just to

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give you a couple concrete examples. So, I

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mentioned the phase one of special education

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reform. So, there is an, and this is, this is

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work led by Deputy Chancellor Laura Rodriguez, it

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is work that we, that my organ--my office partners

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with her hand-in-glove with. It is essentially at

25

its heart trying to take the State spectrum around

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2 special education services and fix the way the
3 City has historically done it. So, historically,
4 we categorize students. Either you are a student
5 who is a District 75 setting, or you're entitled
6 to special class, or collaborative team teaching,
7 or related services. And you were, you were
8 bucketed in one of those four categories. The
9 actual regulations and the law speaks to a
10 spectrum of services. The way they synopsise it
11 is special education should be a service not a
12 place. And too often, special education is a
13 place. And that's been the core problem. And
14 that, what happens is, the student get in the
15 special education designation, and they don't get
16 out, and the outcomes our horrific. And that is
17 the challenge that, under the leadership of Laura
18 Rodriguez, we've taken on.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: I want
20 to, I want to--

21 JOSH THOMASES: So, 245 school--I'm
22 sorry, sir. I'll go quick, So--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: No, no,
24 I just, it's fine, I'll accept that answer, 'cause
25 other colleagues have questions. I just want to

1
2 once again point out, I don't think you're evil,
3 but look at it from our perspective, we're
4 frustrated and I think more could've been done to
5 prevent that frustration from occurring. So
6 that's just what wanted to point out.

7 JOSH THOMASES: Thank you, sir.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Thank
9 you.

10 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.

11 And we would love to hear those details and if you
12 can't get to them today, then maybe you can put
13 those details in writing to us, 'cause clearly we
14 want to know what DOE has done and what it's doing
15 to reduce the achievement gap. You gave a, a
16 brief summary as far as children with special
17 needs with IEPs, but you did not touch on the
18 others. Let me turn to my colleague, Council
19 Member Lew Fidler of Brooklyn. Then followed by
20 Council Member Debbie Rose of Staten Island.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Thank you,
22 Mr.--is this working?

23 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Yeah, a
24 little louder on that one, Lew.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Not working

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2 either way.

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COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Can't you
take a hit, Lew?

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COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: I was just
about to say that I agree with just about
everything that my colleagues before me have said,
particularly Council Member Weprin, before he
opened his snarky mouth. [laughter] And I
actually, I do, even the Governor had a good,
couple of good points there.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: - - [laughter

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: I, I am--I
am also a product of New York City public schools,
and somewhere along the line, I was taught the
expression, "Figures lie and liars figure."

[laughter] And I'm not calling you guys liars,
but I, I, and really I'm not. But listening to--

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: One second,
please. Lew, hold on a second. Can you hear him
in the back?

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AUDIENCE: No.

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: I, I can be
heard in the back.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Well, Lew,

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2 can you just--

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COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Want to hear me in the back?

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: No speak directly into the mic a little bit closer, Lew.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: I think I am.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Like that, yeah, like that.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: All right. And I'm not calling you guys liars, but listening to your presentation, I could pretty much say that you could've pulled out of this barrelful of statistics just about any group of statistics to prove whatever point you wanted to make . And, you know, particularly, even Governor Barron mentioned the, well, if you, if they got two more [laughter] if they got two more questions right on the raw score, 14 percent more would've passed, there's always a line like that, and I wonder what, whether ten years ago if, you know, if they got two more questions right on the raw score, 27 percent more would've passed. I mean, that's, that's one of those statistics that, you know, we

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2

say in Brooklyn for gazy [phonetic]. Okay?

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[laughter] You could make any argument for why we

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should or shouldn't be concerned, why you're doing

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a great job or you're not doing a good job, and

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the very point that, that dawns on me, as you're

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doing that, is how meaningless the test score

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statistics really are. [applause]

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MALE VOICE: Thank you.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: And the

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emphasis on it, and this, you know, we've had this

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conversation, you and I, Deputy Chancellor, but

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I'm sure one of the minions Deputy Chancellors

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who've sat in this seat, the meaningless of the

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progress report card, which incorporates

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statistics from the tests, and the point then

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comes back to Councilman Weprin's point--it's not

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about the test, it's about learning, it's about

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achievement, it's about readiness. Now what Mr.

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Thomases, is that it?

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JOSH THOMASES: Yes, sir.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Say, not

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being prepared for life, being prepared for

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college, and how insignificant the tests really

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are. Now, they're not totally irrelevant, but the

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2 fact is you can take these statistics and
3 manipulate them in so many different ways. And
4 one of the things that intrigues me, and I want to
5 ask you about, is, you have about eight charts
6 here, in that PowerPoint. Six of them start in
7 either 2005 or 2006. Am I missing something? Who
8 was the Chancellor in 2002, 3 and 4? Who was in
9 charge of the school system? Is there a
10 particular magic to why we started in 2006 on
11 these charts?

12 SHANEL SURANSKY: That's when the
13 State testing system started to test all grades
14 three through eight. Prior to that, they only
15 tested grades four through eight, four and eight,
16 and if you'd like to see the data in the form of
17 just four and eight, I could provide it for you.
18 I have, we've published it on our website, and it
19 actually shows greater gains. So, for example, in
20 2002, if you use these cut scores on the ELA, we
21 were at 22 percent, and we're not at over 40
22 percent. So it actually, you know, is pretty
23 good, if you keep on looking back. But it just
24 isn't an apples to apples comparison, because
25 there wasn't that testing regime in place by the

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2 State until 2005.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Yet we use
4 the, the graduation data that--

5 SHAEL SURANSKY: Because we have--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: --that was
7 different as well, so I mean, we're picking and
8 choosing statistics again--

9 SHAEL SURANSKY: I mean, I'd be
10 happy to provide any--it only looks stronger if
11 you go back.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: But you're
13 missing one other statistic: What's spending for
14 the Department of Education in 2002 compared to
15 2009 and '10? What's per capita spending? How
16 much more money have you guys been given as a
17 system to merit whatever successes you're
18 claiming? All right? What, where are those
19 numbers?

20 SHAEL SURANSKY: I'm not the budget
21 person, but I can tell you there's been a
22 significant increase and the vast majority of
23 those funds have gone into a major increase in
24 teacher salaries--

25 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: So we have-

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SHAEL SURANSKY: --that went up by 45 percent since this Administration started.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: So, so, it's the teachers' fault.

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SHAEL SURANSKY: No, it's not anyone's fault, it's it--

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COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: But you blame the teachers.

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SHAEL SURANSKY: It's actually the teachers have done an amazing job.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Well, I'm glad to hear you say that. I happen to think that many of them do. But the point I'm making here is that you, you are also comparing apples to oranges when you neglect to mention the amount of money that we've invested, that we've given to this Chancellor, to try and do better. So, in, in an Administration with the Mayor, the Education Mayor, says, "We have to do more with less," you're not doing so much more, with more. And the, the fact, the tied up point here is, as, as Council Member Weprin really began on, it's not about the test. We know what works, you know what

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2 works. Quality teachers, reduced class size,
3 involved parents. And if we would stop with the
4 17 different divisions of quality improvement and
5 progress report card, and this and that and the
6 other thing, and just talk to our kids in a
7 smaller, better classroom environment, with
8 trained, quality teachers, we wouldn't be sitting
9 here, at odds with each other, 15 times a year.

10 SHAEL SURANSKY: I think the
11 challenge--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Please,
13 can't we just teach?

14 SHAEL SURANSKY: I think the
15 challenge with the smaller class is that, as, as
16 you probably know is, it costs a lot of money to
17 fund the space and the teachers to create those
18 smaller classes. And, and respectfully, though
19 there have been increases over the course of the
20 Administration, over the past couple years,
21 there's been over \$2 billion in cuts. Twelve
22 percent of that or so was sustained by schools,
23 more than double that sustained by the folks at
24 Central. And so, there--and we've been working
25 closely with the Council, and in fact the Council

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2 at points has been able to restore some of the
3 funding, which we're very grateful for.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: You're
welcome.

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SHAEL SURANSKY: It's, it's not an
easy thing for any of us to see these cuts, but
this is, the environment we've been in, in the
last two years, is one of declining resources,
both across the system.

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JOSH THOMASES: If I may, just two
points, Councilman. One is, as a nation, since
the, Ronald Reagan's report on "A Nation at Risk"
came out in 1983, we've doubled, tripled, even
quadrupled the amount of spending on education,
and as a nation haven't significantly moved the
bar. And so, the challenge of spending money well
is, is not lost nationally. The, the second point
I just want to, I just want to say, around the
accountability system, is the, the classic
conversation, I come out of public schools in New
York, both as a student and a teacher, the, the,
the easiest way to dismiss the success of others
in the system, is to say, "Oh, but you don't have
my kids." And actually, you and I were, not

1
2 necessarily the finest of my, of my life or yours,
3 but we were at a closure hearing at, I think it
4 was at Tilden High School or South Shore, where
5 they, where they said essentially that. And the
6 heart of what the progress report does and what
7 the accountability does is it, is it allows us to
8 compare schools, and understand where are the
9 schools that are getting breakout performance?
10 Where are the schools that are doing amazing
11 things with top performing students, that, that
12 come in? And where are those schools that, that
13 are not moving the bar with students who are
14 struggling? And at its heart, we've got to create
15 school, every single school, needs to, needs to
16 move the bar. And, and we need to get beyond the
17 question of these are not our, my kids, these are
18 not the right kids, you don't know how hard my
19 kids are, say, "Well, you know, what? There are
20 schools that are, that are doing amazing things
21 with everybody's kids." And we need to do that
22 everywhere. And a, and a way to talk about that
23 across schools has been an important tool in
24 changing the dialogue about what, about how
25 principals in schools behave around meeting the

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2 needs of students.

3

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: And Mr.

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Thomas is mentioning Tilden and South Shore in my

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presence is a little like waving a red flag in

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front of a bull, so I'm, I'm going to just pass on

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that. But I would just say to you that, you know,

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the mention of the amount of money that's being

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spent in this country since the Reagan years on

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education, and how we haven't significantly moved

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the bar, would at least say to me, we're doing the

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wrong thing. If we're spending more money and not

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succeeding, then we're doing the wrong thing. And

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so, I quite frankly don't think the statistics

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that you've manipulated for us today have shown

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that you're doing the right thing. All right, we

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know what the right thing is, and I recognize the

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fiscal limitations about getting to smaller class

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sizes and the whatnot, although there are no

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fiscal implications in the way we've shut teachers

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and parents out of the system. That doesn't cost

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a nickel. So, you know, I will leave it at that,

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I just want to say one other thing, 'cause I'm

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sure the Chairman wants to move on.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Yes.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: I'm sorry
3 that Councilman Ignizio has, has left us. You
4 know, the Chancellor has become before the
5 Education Committee before. But he really
6 should've been here today. And the Chairman and
7 Council Member Dromm and I have introduced a piece
8 of legislation here in support of a bill
9 introduced to the Assembly by my good friend,
10 Assemblyman Alan Maisel, that would require that
11 the next Chancellor be approved by the City
12 Council, be subject to the advice and consent of
13 the City Council, and I daresay if that was the
14 rule of law in the State of New York for this
15 City, the Chancellor would've been in that seat
16 today. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you,
18 Council Member. Now, Council Member Debbie Rose
19 of Staten Island, followed by Council Member
20 Lander. And then Council Member Chin.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Deputy
22 Chancellors, when Council Member Barron said that
23 the state of our schools were in crisis, you
24 seemed to have taken, you know, exception to that,
25 and it's, it's amazing to me that, you know, you

1
2 took exception to the word "crisis," when our
3 parents, our teachers, and even our children know
4 that our schools are in crisis. And that it is
5 amazing that it's almost as if--it just, we just
6 realized that we have this huge achievement gap,
7 that we are, are in a state of crisis, and it
8 seems like we, we don't really realize how we got
9 here, and when we got here. When we've been here
10 for quite a while. You know, in my other life,
11 my, just before I was elected, I was the Director
12 of a Dropout Prevention Program, and it was
13 obvious to me, to my colleagues, to the teachers,
14 that the graduation rates were not being honestly
15 reflected. And so, I want to know if this
16 increase in graduation rates that you've stated
17 today, is based on the old calibration, or the new
18 recalibration, and, and if so what were we looking
19 at prior to this generation of numbers?

20 SHAEL SURANSKY: So, to your
21 question, the chart to the right shows you the
22 orange line is the State's method for calculating
23 graduation rates, which the City has been using
24 for all accountability purposes, and what we
25 report. The blue line is the method that was used

1
2 prior to 2005, and it represents a different
3 method that included IAP diplomas and GED
4 diplomas, and is therefore no longer used because
5 it's less rigorous. Either method you look at,
6 there's an increase that's substantial, and I
7 think that, you know, I, I certainly don't want
8 you to come away from the comments I've made, that
9 I don't have a strong sense of urgency about
10 improving our schools. The, the notion that
11 there's suddenly a crisis because the State
12 redefined the cut scores, is not accurate. And
13 the, the challenges that we're facing now, are
14 challenges we've been facing for a long time, and
15 frankly, if you look at those numbers, which are
16 the only historical numbers that go all the way
17 back, we were hovering around 50 percent
18 graduation rates since the '80s. And it started
19 to change.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: It declined.

21 SHAEL SURANSKY: Well, it, in the
22 '80s it was in the 47-44, and then it was right
23 around 50 from the '90s up to 2002, and then it
24 started going up in a way that is a testament to
25 the work that we've been doing together, I think.

1
2 And I mean, I'll tell you a personal story. I
3 started work as a principal at the Morris High
4 School Campus, this is a campus of African-
5 American and Latino kids, and they were taking in
6 700 kids a year, and graduating 70 kids four years
7 later. And it was one of the dropout factories
8 that President Obama was talking about his morning
9 on the news, he gave an interview. And he said
10 that we need to stop allowing these dropout
11 factories to continue to serve our kids. And one
12 of the things that this Administration has tried
13 to do is give new groups of educators a shot to
14 create smaller, more personalized learning
15 environments in those institutions that have
16 failed year after year after year, and that's part
17 of the reason why we do see the achievement gap
18 closing for black and Latino students, and it's
19 part of the reason why we do see the graduation
20 rate increasing.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: But they're
22 doing worse on tests, and when they graduate they
23 are not--

24 SHAEL SURANSKY: They're not doing
25 worse on tests.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: --qualified,
3 they are not qualified to do the level of work
4 that's required of them.

5 SHAEL SURANSKY: I agree with you
6 that it's unacceptable to see 50 percent of our
7 kids currently in remedial classes at CUNY,
8 because what happens to a kid is they have to use
9 their college loan money and they often exhaust
10 that money paying for those classes, and then they
11 don't have enough money when they get to the
12 credit bearing classes. That said, that, that has
13 also been improving. And it's improving slowly,
14 but the way that we get to a better set of
15 outcomes in terms of getting kids successful in
16 college is first we need to stop them from
17 dropping out and get them to graduate. And then
18 we need to increase the rigor of the curriculum,
19 which is exactly what we've been trying to do.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: I want to ask
21 you about the, the fact that in the local papers
22 you read, at the beginning of September, that a
23 number of young people were graduated or promoted,
24 and found out in September that they had not been
25 promoted. How did that happen? And then, and

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2 what are we doing to, to make sure that that
3 doesn't happen again? And then, how many of those
4 students attended summer school? How many should
5 have attended summer school? Because of the, the,
6 I guess the error with the testing.
7 Recalculation.

8 JOSH THOMASES: I don't have, so,
9 first, I just wanted to go to your earlier
10 question, I just want to say, we're, as clear as
11 I can, we're not saying there isn't a crisis in
12 education. We're just saying it didn't start this
13 summer. Right, the national crisis in education,
14 right. So, so, but--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Absolutely, I
16 think, I think you should be ashamed to be able to
17 say that, it's been so long that we're, we've had
18 this crisis.

19 JOSH THOMASES: So, the, the--our,
20 our answer would be, and my answer would be, and
21 this, this work is very hard, and if I knew a way
22 to turn around public education so that we were
23 graduating 90 percent of our students college and
24 career ready tomorrow, I'd do it. We are moving
25 the bar faster than any other large urban school

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2 district in the country. And, and we're not
3 saying congratulate us for that; what we are
4 saying is, that success is the base--that success,
5 and I say that in parenthesis because it's hard to
6 call something a success when you're still only
7 graduating six in ten students. But where we've
8 actually managed to move the rate, where we've
9 reduced the number of dropouts, from approximately
10 140,000 to approximately 100,000, hundred--right,
11 we're still hemorrhaging young people. But, but--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Right, we
13 need what works.

14 JOSH THOMASES: And, and--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: We know what
16 works.

17 JOSH THOMASES: Agreed. And we're
18 figuring out how to move it, and figuring out how
19 to position teachers to, to Councilman Fidler's
20 point around effective teachers, to position
21 teachers to be increasingly more effective. As we
22 are, we are moving as aggressively as, as we can
23 figure out to. And, and you know, I'll meet, I've
24 met with lots of groups who've come up, who've
25 talked about ideas for how to move the bar. Many

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2 of the groups, including many who've been highly
3 critical of this Administration, like, like ACORN,
4 have opened new small schools. We'll work with
5 anybody who's going to take an idea and take
6 responsibility for moving a group of students. To
7 your question, I wasn't trying to dodge the
8 question around summer school. I'm--the heart of
9 the, the heart of the answer is, because the State
10 didn't announce the cut scores until the middle of
11 the summer, long after students left, we weren't,
12 we were not able to, we couldn't know for sure
13 where the promotion line and proficiency line was
14 going to be. And so what we tried to do in, in
15 June, was make our best prediction based on the,
16 the students, based upon the student performance
17 and what we had as indicators from the State,
18 around where the cut would be. And on the basis
19 of that, made decisions around who, who would not
20 be promoted and who would have to go to summer
21 school. We tried to be as conservative as
22 possible, we clearly did not hit that bar, and,
23 and I can make sure that after this, after this
24 hearing, you get the numbers. And so those are
25 the ones we've been seeing in the papers, right,

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2 those are the most, the frustrated parents, the
3 young women who, who thought that, who that they
4 were in this grade, and they're now in that grade.
5 And, you know, the, the town hall meeting in
6 Brownsville that I was at, we spoke with several
7 parents of students who were in the, one who was,
8 I spoke with one who was in the seventh grade and
9 one who was in the eighth grade, each who thought
10 seventh was going to eighth, eighth was going to
11 ninth, who were frustrated in trying to figure out
12 what they should do for their, in both case, sons,
13 who would do differently.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Could you--

15 JOSH THOMASES: Yes, ma'am.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Could you not
17 in fact ask for a waiver for a year, would that
18 have, have any impact on these young people who
19 were promoted, but before the recalibration?

20 SHAEL SURANSKY: Just to be clear,
21 the State has asked for some waivers from the
22 federal government, but we haven't asked for a
23 waiver. There, there are two groups, I think,
24 that are getting confused. There was an article
25 last week about a kid who found out after starting

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2 school that they hadn't been promoted. And there
3 were a handful of cases, I think something like
4 ten to 20, where there was just a very bad
5 communication that occurred between the school and
6 the family, partially because this was all
7 happening in the last weeks of August. And that's
8 totally unacceptable, and it's totally unfair that
9 that should happen, and I think that what Josh is
10 pointing to is part of the reason we're in that
11 situation is everything's being done late in the
12 summer. There is another group of kids that
13 would've been held back under the new promotional
14 requirements, but because we didn't have those
15 state test scores yet, were not held back. And
16 they were promoted because we didn't have that
17 data then, and they went on, and they are in the
18 next grade, and the schools are very focus on
19 "What do we need to make sure those kids don't
20 fail this year?" because actually got a level I
21 and that puts them at risk.

22 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.

23 Thank you, Council Member.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Council

25 Member Jackson, I just, I know I used my time.

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2 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: No, you're
3 already ten minutes already, Council Member, I'm
4 sorry.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Okay, Jumaane
6 asked me to read a, just a statement.

7 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I'll take it.
8 Okay. Council Member Lander.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thanks very
10 much, Mr. Chairman. I, I find myself in an
11 interesting position today. Like the colleagues
12 that have testified before me, I have frustration
13 with what I view as a significant over reliance on
14 high stakes testing, pushing the parents out of
15 the system, and in a hearing when everyone from
16 Governor Barron to Eric Ulrich to David Greenfield
17 to Vinnie Ignizio have raised strong arguments
18 against the Administration, I find it odd that I
19 would feel some sympathy. And yet, both of you
20 individually, separate from each other, I know to
21 be fantastic educators. All right, I know you
22 were dynamite classroom teachers, really great
23 school leaders, who cared about your teachers, and
24 who never taught to the test, or let anybody else
25 teach to the test, and who consistently worked to

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2 provide the support folks need to improve student
3 performance and improve teacher performance, in
4 the way that I think most of the people in this
5 room would really agree was exactly what we're
6 hoping for, and would be moved by it. And I know
7 you took the jobs you currently have out of a goal
8 to push that way that you dealt with students, and
9 the way that you guys dealt with teachers, across
10 a very large, very bureaucratic system. And I
11 mean, I know that's true, personally. So, so
12 first I thank you for coming, and you know, and
13 I'm not particularly upset that the Chancellor
14 didn't come, because I know you guys are both
15 there working on it every day. And yet, here you
16 are, standing in front of a system that I think,
17 certainly by the perception of every Council
18 Member you've heard, by my own personal perception
19 as a public school parent, and by the perception
20 of the hundreds, thousands of parents that I have
21 talked to individually, who perceive that the
22 system has been, over the period of this
23 Chancellor, adjusted to emphasize and focus on
24 high stakes testing. That in the experience of
25 the students, that in the experience of the

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2 teachers, that in the experience of the
3 principals, is significantly more oriented around
4 high stakes testing than it was at some point in
5 the past, that that's how performance and
6 evaluation are going to be measured and graded, and
7 therefore, that's how they have to spend more and
8 more of their time, as Council Member Weprin said
9 at the beginning of the hearing. And I mean, it
10 takes me to the, to the first graph you put up,
11 which I thought was a great one, which suggests
12 that the, that the, the skills our kids need to
13 succeed are the hardest to test and evaluate. We
14 want them to be thinking creatively, to be engaged
15 in teamwork, to be problem solving, and boy those
16 are hard things to test. And so, I guess I want
17 to say one thing, and then ask one thing. I think
18 part of what happened here with this
19 recalibration, is a set of people who already feel
20 enormous frustration around what I just said, the
21 time spent on testing, energy spent on tests, the
22 way that the system has been restructured, so
23 there's not a superintendent who's supposed to
24 provide support to principals, providing support
25 to teachers. It certainly feels like more and

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2 more of the way people are evaluated, schools are
3 evaluated, the system evaluated, is based on
4 testing. You have people frustrated with that,
5 and then they get this news that the recalibration
6 knocked scores down, and so what already made
7 people angry now feels like a crisis even if it's
8 a reinterpretation of, of how you look at the
9 data, it sure hasn't changed from point of view
10 the underlying point, it's not the new numbers
11 that are a frustration of mine, it's the
12 overreliance on testing data. Now, I want
13 accountability. I don't know how the two of you
14 are going to push good practice out to a giant
15 system without some means, some methods of
16 accountability, that help us see which schools are
17 doing well, and help them improve. But boy it
18 feels to me like the way we're doing it over
19 relies on a particular set of things in a way that
20 I think isn't healthy, where principals think,
21 "Well, I got to help those few kids who were just
22 below last time, get above, and so I should focus
23 my enrichment on those kids who--and so, I guess
24 my question is, you guys are both very smart and
25 creative, and you think--have you looked at

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2 methods of evaluation that while not, still
3 complying with, you know, No Child Left Behind and
4 NAEP, would adjust to counter some of these
5 problems, to make more time for different kinds of
6 creative programming, for arts, for culture, and
7 that would seek as much as possible to minimize
8 the harm to the system done, by at least the
9 rampant perception, if not the reality, that
10 getting a test score is what's going to make
11 everybody succeed?

12 SHAEL SURANSKY: Well, thank you
13 for your comments, I appreciate--I think that
14 you're right, that one of the challenges is how do
15 you create a balanced accountability system, and
16 I've been in this job just over a year. And last
17 January, I announced two significant changes. One
18 is, and we're starting this, this coming year, in
19 middle schools we're going to start looking at the
20 grades teachers are giving as part of how we
21 gather data on schools. It's something we already
22 do at the high school level, and I think that the
23 concerns that have been raised around high stakes
24 testing and the progress reports, are much less
25 intense at the high school level because of that,

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2 because the high school progress report measures
3 the Regents Exams, but it also measures the grades
4 that teachers are giving, and the courses and the
5 graduation rate. And I think that if you, if we
6 can start to do that at the elementary and middle
7 school level, which we are piloting this year at
8 the middle school level, one it gives you data on
9 other subjects. So, right now, the State tests
10 only cover literacy and math. Teachers are giving
11 grades in all core subjects, and so that broadens
12 the base of the curriculum that's being assessed.
13 And, and then, the other thing is it trusts the,
14 the judgments that educators are making day-to-day
15 about their kids' performance, because what a lot
16 of the national research shows, is that, you know,
17 when you look at kids' performance, for example,
18 in college, the grades that teachers gave are a
19 very powerful predictor of that. And so it's
20 really good data. The second thing we, we've been
21 talking about today and, and since the winter, is
22 let's, let's broaden what is on those assessments.
23 So the reason the slide, this comes from OECD,
24 actually, the reason the slide exists is that in
25 many countries around the world, there's been

1 attempt to balance measuring the kinds of things
2 you can measure with a bubble test, and
3 assessments that are more authentic and
4 performance based. And we have literally dozens,
5 if not well over 100 schools in the City that have
6 been doing that in, on their own, you know,
7 without support from Central, for a long time.
8 And so this is not new work, it's not something
9 that just got invented, but what's exciting is
10 that with this new leadership at the State, which
11 has really embraced this work, and has embraced
12 these new national standards, and has said we
13 actually want to change how the State tests are
14 structured. And focus them less on multiple
15 choice, and more on these kinds of authentic work.
16 I think it really changes the, the kinds of things
17 that teachers need to think about, because if your
18 question now is "How do I get a kid to make a
19 really powerful presentation to their peers or
20 write a really good research paper?" it's a, it's
21 a deep kind of work. And not all teachers are
22 ready for that. And so part of the pilots that
23 Josh mentioned that we're doing in 100 schools
24 around the City, which will then scale to more
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2 schools the following year, is actually taking
3 assessments that are aligned to these new
4 standards that aren't bubble tests, that actually
5 test both the basic skills and these higher order
6 skills, and trying to figure out what has to
7 change with the teaching, what has to change in
8 the curriculum. How do we support teachers to
9 make that transition in a way that will prepare
10 them? Because the, the deeper changes that will
11 come as a result of these new State assessments
12 are going to make the changes that we're seeing
13 this summer look very small. We aren't, we aren't
14 yet at the point where all of our schools are
15 doing that, but we have a lot of rich capacity in
16 the system, and we actually have strong support at
17 the State level to do this. And so I think it's
18 actually a moment where there can be some really
19 common work between folks who have previously
20 disagreed. And, you know, I would invite you guys
21 to work with us on this.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: So, I thank
23 you for that, for that answer, I mean, I think
24 the, the notion that there is some openness to
25 some different kinds of creative thinking about

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2 how we do evaluation is, a lot of at least what
3 some people in the room kind of communicate with
4 me are, are angry about, and I think would be
5 excited, at least open to the idea of. I guess
6 just one little question on--You mentioned before,
7 doing these kind of 5,000 classrooms you visited,
8 and I assume, that sounded like it was sort of
9 also on the goal--

10 SHAEL SURANSKY: Right.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Is there a
12 model being used? How is that figuring into
13 folks' evaluation? And then I'll - - my question.

14 SHAEL SURANSKY: [interposing] Good
15 question. So, so, it's, it's much less dramatic
16 than the progress report. But it actually is a
17 very powerful part of the evaluation for
18 principals and for schools. And every, every
19 school over a four year period gets a quality
20 review. Every school that is showing weakness in
21 their data gets one every year. And basically
22 what the quality review is looking at is the
23 question of what's, what's the rigor of the
24 curriculum? What's the rigor of what's happening
25 with the classroom teachers? We, we visit eight

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2 to ten classrooms in each school, we talk to kids,
3 we talk to teachers, we look at examples of
4 student work, we talk about what are the
5 professional development supports that are going
6 on. And in the principal performance review, the
7 progress report counts about 33 percent, progress
8 re--the quality review counts 22 percent, so it's
9 slightly less, but it's a, a strong part of their
10 evaluation, and something principals take very,
11 very seriously. And it's not, it's not something
12 that you can, you can have a good school that has
13 a great curriculum, but if they haven't developed
14 a strategy to integrate the curriculum, the
15 teaching, the way that they assess kids, the way
16 teachers are developed, the way their resources
17 are used, you don't get a great school overall.
18 And that, those levers for improvement are very
19 powerful and what we've been able to do over the
20 past year-and-a-half with the quality review is
21 really in--infuse a strong instructional focus
22 within that. And I'd welcome you, you know, you
23 should start looking for that change by looking at
24 the reports. Every single school has a report
25 that's published online. One of the, one of the

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2 complaints we heard from parents is that the
3 reports sounded too generic, that they weren't
4 specific enough. And so now we're requiring when
5 reviewers do their reports, that whatever they say
6 good or bad about the school, they give us
7 concrete, real example that they observed in the
8 school, so that there's something tangible that
9 parents can look at. And so, this, this is an
10 attempt to again create a balance and it's, it's
11 one of the ways that we can check some of the
12 places where there is weak leadership, and where
13 people are going down sort of a kneejerk reaction
14 of too much test prep.

15 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: I
17 appreciate, I appreciate those answers, I just--

18 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Okay.

20 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you,
21 Council Member. Council Member Margaret Chin.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you. I
23 just want to follow up on what's next? I know
24 that we're all frustrated and, and we wanted to
25 really make sure that the kids who got their test

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2 score and were told that, "Oh, you failed, you got
3 to move back, you can't progress, get the help
4 that they do get. So, if you can talk a little
5 bit about what kind of programs are going to be in
6 place to help these kids. And the other thing
7 about these high stake testing, is really creating
8 a culture, not just in our school, I mean, the
9 kids are getting nervous, my husband is a public
10 school teacher, and I was a former school teacher.
11 And I don't remember all these testings. And even
12 some of the tests that the kids take, they're not
13 being used. Like the social study test, I mean,
14 it's posted somewhere and it's not--

15 SHAEEL SURANSKY: The State
16 eliminated that this year with their budget.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: But, things
18 like that. But what I also show in the chart, I
19 mean, what I, the fear I have is like, we want to
20 get parents involved, but we don't want parents to
21 also get too consumed about these tests, and some
22 of the, the parents especially in the Asian
23 community, people that, that come to my office and
24 I know, friends and families, who, you know, send
25 their kids to cram school on the weekend, and I

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2 mean, the kids have no time to go play baseball,
3 they got to go and, and study. And that's how
4 many they got higher score on the test, but the
5 kids gives up a lot for that. And parents
6 shouldn't see the test as the only way to measure
7 what the kids learn, either. So, I think that we
8 really have to really take a look at not paying so
9 much attention on these test score, but on, as we
10 talked about earlier, how to really evaluate our
11 kids and also get parents involved. Because if
12 parents don't reinforce at home, it's going to be
13 very hard for the teacher. So it's got to be a
14 partnership working together, and we have to
15 really engage the parents. And in terms of
16 resource, like parent coordinator, I mean, how can
17 one person deals with a couple of hundred parents?
18 It's really a lack of resources there. But right
19 now, I think for today, is like how many of these
20 students who got left back or, or were told that
21 they're, they're not going ahead, and need the
22 special help and are they going to be getting it?

23 JOSH THOMASES: So, thank you.
24 Just give a couple key concrete, try and get as
25 concrete and specific as possible. So, every

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2 school belongs to a network of schools that
3 they've chosen to affiliate with, to work together
4 and learn from. That network team has several
5 instructional staff over the course of this year,
6 as part of both cost saving measures and making
7 sure that there's an alignment to the networks.
8 We've positioned several additional instructional
9 folks on those staff, including a coordinator of
10 early intervention services. So every network
11 has, the term is CEIS, for those who like acronym
12 soup, but have a coordinator of early intervention
13 services. And that person's job is to work across
14 the network to make sure that they're, that the
15 intervention services at each school, that the
16 students are getting the supports they need. So
17 the, one of the examples that I gave earlier in my
18 testimony is the kind of work that that person's
19 doing, where at PS93 they're working with the
20 content area teachers who are pushing in the
21 classrooms for content, or covering the classroom
22 when the, when the, the main teacher's has, has
23 period prep. That they understand early
24 intervention, that they have early intervention
25 skills, as part of their repertoire, so that

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2 they're not just there simply giving science
3 content, but that their responsible for giving
4 science content in a way they can meet students
5 where they're at. So that gives you some sense of
6 the staffing. And what's happening specifically
7 at each school? At each school, we, we are asking
8 superintendents and network leaders to work with
9 those school communities to make sure that
10 they're, that they've got a plan to meet the needs
11 of that school community. That's specifically
12 using the additional after school time that's part
13 of the instructional day, about 100, there are a
14 150 minutes of instructional time. Some of that
15 time can be used for teachers to meet about one-
16 fifth of it, about 30 minutes of it. The rest of
17 the time is to work with students in, in small
18 group settings or one-on-one. To make sure that
19 that time is in line well with the instructional
20 day. The heart we see students for 27-and-a-half
21 hours every week. We need to use that time well.
22 And so, every school is coming up with a school by
23 schools plan. What the school's doing, as I said
24 earlier, and I'm not trying to be vague, I'm
25 trying to be respectful of the fact that the needs

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2 of schools vary differently on the basis, on the
3 needs of students, on the skills of teachers, on
4 the, on the strength of principles, on the
5 particular part of the City they're in. And so
6 schools are coming up with those plans. Those
7 plans are being talked about at school leadership
8 teams and with PTAs as we speak, tonight, last
9 week, at CEC meetings, and the like. And, and the
10 superintendents are talking them through, as well.
11 So, at CEC meetings and everywhere they talk to.
12 By October, we're going to ask those plans to be
13 submitted to us, essentially so that we can have
14 some sense of how the time's being used, and, and
15 be able to share both in this venue and in others,
16 what our sense if of the supports that are
17 happening for students. I think, I mean, I want
18 to be clear how challenging this is. Not as an
19 excuse, but merely that we are schooled at our, at
20 our highest point of success right now as
21 graduating six and ten. So, getting to figure out
22 how to make sure every child gets to meet those
23 needs, gets their needs met is, is the task that
24 we have to take on, 'cause there is no, there is
25 no more important task. But it is a very

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2 challenging one, and so we're going to be doing
3 this work, school by school. The key people
4 working with each school are our network leaders
5 and superintendents, and their teams, and, and
6 the, the, and just to, to get to the, the test
7 prep challenge, in our conversations citywide with
8 superintendents and network leaders, we've used
9 the, the quality review that Shael spoke about
10 earlier, to be very clear that, that where we see
11 real success in some of the stories that I told
12 earlier, we see real success because teachers and
13 faculty and school communities go well beyond the
14 confines of the, of the tests. And, and that's
15 true across the City, and it's true in, in
16 predominately black communities, Latino
17 communities, white communities, Asian communities,
18 mixed communities, wealthy communities and poor
19 communities, that the schools that moved this best
20 figured out how to ground their work well beyond
21 that. The school that, that I helped found did
22 that as well. I'm deeply connected in the arts,
23 and community, culturally relevant curriculum to
24 use, as you've all termed him, Governor Barron's
25 terminology. But that's the kind of work, that's

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2 the kind of dialogue we're having across the City,
3 and then the work that we're digging in with every
4 school community.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you,
6 thank you, Council Member, appreciate it. Our
7 colleague Jumaane Williams left early, but he
8 asked one of our colleagues to read his brief
9 statement, and I will read it for him. And it
10 reads, "Only this Administration could be
11 'gangster' enough to come in here and still not
12 take accountability for what are palpable mistakes
13 and failures. I implore you to begin to take
14 stock on what everyone sees. Only then can we
15 begin a real dialogue to--

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FEMALE VOICE: [off mic] --to fix
17 this.

18

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: --to fix
19 this." That's our colleague Jumaane Williams.
20 [applause] Let me just turn, normally it's the
21 way I operate, I allow my colleagues to go before
22 I ask questions. So I'm going to turn to Council
23 Member Weprin, and then I will entertain questions
24 to the both of you. Okay? Council Member Weprin.

25

COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Mr.

1
2 Chairman, thank you, I just had a, just brief
3 follow up. So, we, I do really appreciate your
4 being here today, it's not an easy job for both of
5 you, and I, I am sure you're both quality
6 educators and, and your hearts are in the right
7 place. And so much of what you said today I think
8 is great. If it was eight years ago, I really
9 would've thought it was great, and would've had
10 more credibility, but a lot of the programs you
11 talk about, about deemphasizing standardized
12 tests, about, you know, all these other programs
13 to evaluate teachers. So, this is the question
14 I'd like to ask you. And the fact that you say
15 that, you know, we're not, shouldn't be doing test
16 prep, there isn't, most schools are not doing test
17 prep, I'd like to get one of those DOE little
18 email blasts tomorrow that says, "Chancellor
19 announces pilot program to deemphasize
20 standardized tests for evaluating teacher; to not
21 use standard, you know, multiple choice questions
22 as the reason to judge teachers and principals and
23 students, only; to deemphasize the progress
24 report, which gets all the attention, which is 85
25 percent standardized tests, and 15 percent all the

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2 stuff that I really care about; and to use the--"
3 I don't even mind the quality review, I mean, all
4 these things are exactly what you said today,
5 really. A lot of the things you said today, I
6 just said maybe not as nicely. But, but you are
7 saying you want to deemphasize that. And I'm
8 telling you it is hurting our schools, and the one
9 thing that sets me off is I honestly feel that
10 because these schools have been obsessed about
11 trying to get those test scores up by hook or by
12 crook, and I mean by crook on a lot of cases, if
13 we could just change everything and focus on the
14 things that Mr. Fidler and a lot of the people
15 said we all know works. Which is getting parents
16 involved, to make sure the good quality teachers,
17 I want to, I want teachers to have standards and
18 judge teachers, but not just on how my kid does on
19 a standardized test. Good teachers inspire kids
20 to learn, don't just teach 'em how to bubble in
21 the right answers. So, you seem to agree with me
22 on a lot of these points. So, my, my question is,
23 is there a possibility that the Chancellor will
24 make a statement any time soon that we want to
25 deemphasize these bubble in standardized tests,

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2 and not make them the end all be all of whether a
3 teacher principal is good, is good.

4 SHAEL SURANSKY: I think if, if
5 people actually look closely at what's happening,
6 and listen closely, you'll see that there's a
7 balanced approach that we've been pursuing and it,
8 it may not have been the most controversial stuff,
9 but it's not actually entirely new. Like there
10 was a letter that I sent to every principal
11 talking about the things that I've talked to. It
12 went, went out in the Chancellor's weekly in
13 January. It's posted on the accountability
14 website, talking about these changes. And what
15 we're talking about is a balance. We don't want
16 to be in a situation where kids can't add, and so
17 we do need some basic tests, and we need--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: - - that--

19 SHAEL SURANSKY: [interposing] --
20 and we also need the higher order skills. And so
21 there's, we don't want to be in a situation where
22 there's no accountability, we want to be in a
23 situation where there's a balance. And--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: I, I agree.

25 SHAEL SURANSKY: In - -

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COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: And right now there's no balance in my mind, and if we get to the--

SHAEL SURANSKY: Look closer.

COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: All right, well, I looked pretty closely for a long time.

SHAEL SURANSKY: Let's go together. I mean, let's go together--

COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: I would be happy to do that. Any of the schools in my--I mean, it's unanimous, every principal in my school district, every one of them thinks the system stinks, okay. Every one of 'em. So that's besides the point.

SHAEL SURANSKY: Let's go--

COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: But that's besides the point, and I don't know who you're talking to. People who might work for you, and that's a problem. But, but--[applause] let's hold off one second, don't clap. Just, you said that there's no, there shouldn't be test prep going on, it's not going on in most schools. How about this? How about getting an email tomorrow that says, "Chancellor bans test prep in schools" and

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2 Stanley Kaplan's got to go out of business in New
3 York City public schools [cheers] he's got to find
4 somewhere else to get his work done. That sounds
5 like a--I mean, it's not happening anyway, they're
6 not using test prep, and they shouldn't be if they
7 are, but one idea, why don't we say you can't.
8 And then we all know why they don't do that. We
9 also know why they don't purpose--put a program in
10 to check for cheating on tests, and they've done
11 in some states, because we don't want the answer,
12 'cause we like the fact that they're cheating.

13 SHAEL SURANSKY: That's actually
14 not true, we started auditing the scoring of
15 Regents Exams this year, and that was also
16 announced in the January letter. Sent to
17 principals and the, the results of that audit will
18 come out this--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: But we
20 don't, we don't put a test in that, I forgot which
21 state in the Midwest does it now, and other
22 states, does a test on the, on the ELA and the
23 math, to see whether there's cheating going on in
24 those schools.

25 SHAEL SURANSKY: That's what we're

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2 looking for, is we - -

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COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN:

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[interposing] All right, but you're doing it, it's

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a little too late now, eight years later, and if

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you're talking about just Regents, and as I

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mentioned before you got eight years that those

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children are never getting back.

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SHAEL SURANSKY: For, for 3-8

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tests, we actually have monitors that go in,

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several hundred classrooms during the testing

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time, to monitor exactly that, unannounced. And

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so, there's, there's a robust attempt to hold

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people accountable, and if you know of an instance

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of cheating, then you should report it. We have

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investigations that go on when that occurs, and

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it's relatively rare that there, there are charges

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sustained, but there have been charges sustained,

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and that's public.

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COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Well, I

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will tell you that either directly or indirectly,

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cheating is going on on almost every exam being

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given right now in the City of New York. Either a

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teacher's telling kids to reread number eight, or

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you might want to read number 16 carefully, it's a

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tricky question.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.

Council Member Danny Dromm of Queens.

COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you, thank you. And I couldn't agree more with what the majority of the Council Member said here today. I just become so frustrated that sometimes I just can only sit back and listen and don't even really know how to respond to a lot of the answers that you've provided here today. Or the Chancellor's attitude and the fact that he's absent here today, and over emphasis on testing. Having been a public school teacher for 25 years, this time last year I was in the classroom. I know the devastating effect that these tests have had on our students. And the harm that these tests have done to the students, and the harm that the system has done to our students. And the fact that these scores were changed and that you come in here and tell us that we shouldn't believe what our own eyes see is the truth, and that it hasn't really been quite as bad as it may seem that it is, is unbelievable. And in fact, I agree fully with what Council Member Barron said, the

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Chancellor and all of you need to be held accountable as well to the scores that you're trying to hold other people accountable to. And that being said, I heard on the news as I was coming in this morning that the Mayor is continuing to push the use of test scores to determine tenure decisions for teachers, as well. So, even as early as this morning, he's continuing to emphasize the use of test scores to evaluate teachers. Am I correct of that?

SHAEL SURANSKY: Yeah, he made a, a speech this morning about teacher tenure and talking about the four point scale that the State and the Teachers Union agreed on, as an evaluation tool. And when principals evaluate teachers for tenure, we are asking them to look at a range of things, the observations that they do, the conferences that they have with teachers, looking at student work, looking at the data that they've got, which may include test score data as, as one component of it. The agreement the union reached with the State Commissioner was that 40 percent of a teacher's evaluation should be based on student learning measures, 20 percent based on the State

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tests, and 20 percent based on local measures.

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The kinds of local measures that we've started to

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pilot include a range of options, including the

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performance tests that I talked about earlier.

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And I don't think that the Mayor, the Chancellor

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or anyone else is talking about using one measure.

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What we know is that there are places where

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principals just aren't looking closely. We had a

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system where 99.1 percent of our teachers were

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earning tenure every, every time they came up for

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tenure, which is, means that no one was looking

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closely, and what we want principals to do is

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really take that seriously, and really ask the

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question, "Is this, is this teacher performing at

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a level where kids are really learning? And

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should they have a lifetime guarantee of a job?"

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COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: So you're

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using multiple measures now, or you're proposing

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to do that, as we move forward, to evaluate

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teachers. However, you still are using a single

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measure to test--

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SHAEL SURANSKY: That's not true.

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COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: --to

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evaluate students--

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2 SHAEL SURANSKY: Absolutely not
3 true.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: --and to
5 determine whether or not they should move forward.

6 SHAEL SURANSKY: That's not true.
7 There, there's a lot of, every student that gets
8 held back, there's also a portfolio appeal that
9 they can do. And many--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: But
11 portfolio appeal does not really weight what--

12 SHAEL SURANSKY: No--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: --the, score
14 ways, and oftentimes--

15 SHAEL SURANSKY: Well, but--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: --principals
17 would refuse to do that.

18 SHAEL SURANSKY: If it's not
19 merited, they, they would, but there are actually
20 many hundreds of kids that are promoted based on
21 those portfolio appeals, and the reason why that
22 safety valve exists is because if the educators in
23 the school believe that the data that they're
24 seeing on the test doesn't match up with what
25 they're seeing in the classroom, they have an

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opportunity to demonstrate that.

COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Well, I just don't understand why it is that you can't see that with the problems that we had with this test, okay, especially now in light of what's gone on with these new scores, that reliance on these tests to determine what's going to happen in a child's life, or teacher's life, or in the life of a school community, is, it's, it doesn't weigh, it's not good, it's inappropriate, and it should be used in those ways. But that being said, some of the cures that you talked about were these teachers teams, and are you talking about inquiry teams?

JOSH THOMASES: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: And now I understand that the Chancellor has allowed the 37-and-a-half minutes, or one period of the 37-and-a-half minutes, that were part of the last contract, to be used for teacher inquiry team meetings.

JOSH THOMASES: Based on a school based option, vote by both the UFT--

COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: So that's going to then take away from individualized

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2 instruction with the students?

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JOSH THOMASES: There's--Oh, go ahead, Shael.

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6 things we've seen is that the 150 minutes after
7 school was not being used in targeted, strategic
8 ways for the kids who need it most. And part of
9 the reason for that is there wasn't a structured
10 time for teachers to meet and talk about the kids
11 and look closely at the work that they were doing,
12 and where that support is needed. And so,
13 principals, teachers, can elect, if they choose
14 to, to create planning time for teacher teams to
15 think about how to most effectively use the
16 afterschool time, as well as--and really, the
17 afterschool time is a small part of the resources
18 that a school has. Most of the resources happen
19 during the day, and so those teacher teams are
20 also looking at the curriculum, they're looking at
21 professional development, they're looking at the
22 different strategies that teachers are using
23 together, to raise achievement for the kids who
24 are outside of their sphere of success.

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COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Have you

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2 ever done a study to determine the impact that
3 those 37-and-a-half minute programs have had on
4 students? [laughter]

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6 SHAEL SURANSKY: We, we've looked
7 at the, the 37-and-a-half minutes in, in terms of
8 extended time overall. And what we know is that
9 if you look at models of extended time, you get
10 stronger gains. If we could make those 37-and-a-
11 half minutes part--one of, one of the proposals
12 that was originally made when it was negotiated
13 was that there would be an extra part of the
14 school day. That was not something that the Union
15 was amenable to, and so it was focused in the way
16 that it was focused. I think that we have
17 definitely got room to improve in targeting that
18 time, and this is a very good way to do that, by
19 giving teacher teams time to plan and use that
20 time to their advantage.

21

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: I don't
23 think blaming the Union for the lack of a study in
24 terms of understanding what impact those 37-and-a-
25 half minutes has had is the answer to this. I, I
mean I'm just surprised--

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SHAEL SURANSKY: I mean, if you

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2 want to propose a strategy to study it, we'd be
3 happy to.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Well, you
5 could track those students, and you know who's in
6 those classes, and you could find out what their
7 scores are based on either the scores from last
8 year, or the skewed scores, or whichever scores
9 you wanted to use, and you would have some type of
10 an idea. But, that - -

11 SHAEL SURANSKY: [interposing] It's
12 difficult to isolate--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: The other
14 frustrating thing that I find--

15 SHAEL SURANSKY: --what the impact
16 is, though.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: --being on
18 this Committee is that I am always very limited in
19 terms of the amount of time that we can really get
20 into the questions and ask questions, but I do
21 respect my colleagues in that sense. But I do
22 have one final question, which is that you talked
23 also about individualized instruction as being one
24 of the other cures for what's going on in the
25 system. And I'm wondering how you can have a

1
2 teacher doing individualized instruction when you
3 have 32 to 34--and I taught 38 kids in a class, to
4 be honest with you. How is that possible?

5 JOSH THOMASES: It's, I think it's
6 a great question. So the, the core of the
7 challenge in its, in its broadest sense, and I'll
8 try and be, be short, Chairman. But just to give
9 you some concrete examples, is that there are
10 schools that, the schools that'll figure how to do
11 this are doing one of two things. Either they're
12 on the high school level, particularly for
13 students who are overage and under credited, to
14 the dropout issue before. They're using flexible
15 scheduling so student are moving in and out of
16 classes in, in different ways, and are working in
17 smaller groups towards earning the credits and
18 getting the skills necessary for college. One,
19 one term for that is competency based, rather than
20 just subject based. One of the things that we're
21 working with the State on is looking at the issue
22 of what are called seat time requirements. And
23 seat time requirements say you need to sit for 54
24 hours, and at the end of it you can earn a credit.
25 And it means that if a child's, if a child's

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2 gained mastery of a subject in 40 hours, then
3 they're not, it's an arbitrary amount of time; if
4 a child needs 80 hours, right. The other piece
5 is, is the use of, of technology and, and
6 particularly around basic skills and making sure
7 that students practice the basic skills so that
8 they, that they learn what they need to learn.
9 And so if you imagine a classroom in which a group
10 of students who are significantly struggling with
11 addition; or are on a, on a learning computer
12 program that responds to their answers and gives
13 them other computers; and another group of
14 students are working on a complicated report that
15 they're interfacing elsewhere with. And then, and
16 then there are a group of students in small group
17 instruction. So, that, it is very much the
18 cutting edge of what public education is trying to
19 do in this country. There are places in the City
20 that are trying it, My Quest to Learn and, and
21 others. The I-School--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: See, this
23 sound, this sounds good in theory, but my problem
24 with this is that, is that as a teacher, as a
25 cluster teacher when I left the system, I had 45

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2 minutes or 50 minutes on the classroom. I had 30
3 kids. If I was going to see each kid
4 individually, or talk to each kid individually,
5 that gives me about a minute or a minute-and-a-
6 half with each child. And it's physically
7 impossible to be able to do what it is that you're
8 talking about doing.

9 JOSH THOMASES: That's because of
10 how that school was structuring the time.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: No, it's
12 not, not it's not! [grumbling from audience]

13 JOSH THOMASES: Yes, it is.

14 SHAEL SURANSKY: There's, there's
15 lots of models where--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: It's--you
17 can, you can give a child instruction in a minute
18 or a minute-and-a-half.

19 SHAEL SURANSKY: No, you don't have
20 to structure it so a cluster teacher has, has 40
21 minutes with a kid.

22 JOSH THOMASES: - - schools that do
23 that.

24 SHAEL SURANSKY: Well, most
25 schools, for example, push in for two hours into a

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2 class, together with another teacher, so that you
3 divide up the kids and you both have 15 kids, and
4 have some kids working at stations where they can
5 work in small groups inde--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Even 15
7 kids, you're talking two minutes a period, two
8 minutes a child.

9 JOSH THOMASES: You can, you can do
10 groups.

11 SHAEL SURANSKY: Three.

12 JOSH THOMASES: Right, you can do a
13 group of kids that have the same struggle.

14 SHAEL SURANSKY: Then you
15 conference with individual kids--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Then it's
17 not individualized instruction, it's small group
18 instruction.

19 SHAEL SURANSKY: But you, the
20 teacher, if a--if you set up a structure in a
21 classroom where kids are working effectively in
22 small groups, there's often opportunities as a
23 teacher, I know I did it as a teacher, where you
24 do individual conferencing, also.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: And when you

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2 were a teacher, did you have all these tests?

3 SHAEL SURANSKY: Yeah. I mean,
4 there, there were state tests.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: When were
6 you in the classroom? You didn't have the
7 emphasis on testing that we have now.

8 SHAEL SURANSKY: I--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: I don't
10 think so.

11 SHAEL SURANSKY: It, it was, it was
12 - -

13 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM:
14 [interposing] So in your model--

15 SHAEL SURANSKY: --very much a
16 part, I mean, you were there, too, it was very
17 much a part of, of what, what schools were focused
18 on. I as a teacher felt like I was responsible
19 for getting kids to meet the standards that the
20 state required.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: I--

22 SHAEL SURANSKY: I think most
23 teachers feel that way.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: I'll end
25 with this, in the very end when I left the

1
2 classroom last November, my biggest frustration
3 and one of the reasons I was kind of glad to get
4 out, except having been elected was, was a great
5 reason to get out of the classroom, but was this
6 overemphasis on testing and going around the
7 classroom and being forced to put an estimate on a
8 piece of paper whether I thought the child got a--
9 understood the lesson, I'd have to put a check.
10 If I didn't think the child got a lesson, I had to
11 put a minus. If I wasn't sure, I had to put a
12 question mark. And I had to do that for every
13 single child at the end of every single lesson for
14 five, five periods a day. And that is basically
15 the result of this overemphasis on data collection
16 and testing that you have in the public school
17 system. And it takes away from instruction, and
18 it takes from what really teaching is, from what
19 teaching is really all about. And that's
20 individualizing, that's working with kids on a
21 one-to-one level, and knowing those kids. If
22 you're a good teacher, you know what those kids
23 need, you can tell it from the minute you walk in
24 the door. Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.

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2 Thank you, Council Member. [applause] Thank you.

3 I have a couple of questions. Do you know whether
4 or not parents have received their child's test
5 scores from their teachers this year, or any time
6 last year? Or, see if you can answer that
7 question for me.

8 SHAEL SURANSKY: So, the, the State
9 releases an individualized student report which
10 comes out typically earlier, because the State
11 tests have been graded earlier. [off mic] Those
12 reports are coming out - -

13 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: So, the, the
14 examination, you mean, the kids that have already
15 graduated won't, won't get their, that have moved
16 on, they'll get--

17 SHAEL SURANSKY: I mean that,
18 everything is available to parents online as of
19 August 15th.

20 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay.

21 SHAEL SURANSKY: There's
22 individualized reports that are being printed at
23 the school level that, that came once the State
24 finished loading all of that data--

25 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Right.

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SHAEL SURANSKY: --into the system.

[off mic] - -

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Right. Let me ask the question. As far as everything is online as of August 15, do you--I'm sure that you're aware that there are a number of parents that don't have computers at home. They may be able to access a computer at the library, but as you know, more and more people are, are accessing computers at the library. Do you know approximately what percentage of your parents have computers at home, in order to access the information?

SHAEL SURANSKY: What I, what I do know is that 300,000 parents are using ARIS Parent Link, which is the portal to access this information, which is about 30 percent of our parent population. And--

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: About 30 percent?

SHAEL SURANSKY: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay.

SHAEL SURANSKY: And what we've been doing is we've started some pilots,

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2 specifically on providing extra parents in every--
3 extra computers for parents in the school. So,
4 where, where the, the community believes that
5 there's not enough computers at home, we've been
6 providing extra computers in the school. I can
7 send you a list, there's I think almost 200
8 schools that are now involved in some way in that
9 pilot, so that parents can come into the school
10 and access it. And these computers are just
11 dedicated to parents.

12 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Yeah, I, I
13 would like if you could forward us that list. But
14 I'm more, I guess I'm more concerned whether or
15 not, do you feel that there's an obligation on
16 Department of Education to make sure that parents
17 receive, not have access to, receive--

18 SHAEL SURANSKY: No, we, we are
19 sending it home, as well. We were wait--we are,
20 we had to wait until the State published its, it's
21 reports, though.

22 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: And that was
23 when again?

24 SHAEL SURANSKY: They just
25 completed it and we've been loading the data into

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the school system so they can print it out and send it home. So it should be happening in the next couple weeks.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay, so, now you said that they were available online as of August 15th. Is that correct?

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SHAEL SURANSKY: The, the absolute scores were online August 15th, but the individual student reports were just given to us by the State in the last week.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: When you say "absolute scores," what do you, what do you mean by that?

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SHAEL SURANSKY: The difference is the individualized student reports gives a lot more specific data about each kid's--

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Says--
SHAEL SURANSKY: So, you get the absolute score--

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: What do you mean by that? I don't, I'm sorry, I don't understand it.

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SHAEL SURANSKY: I scored a Level III.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay.

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SHAEL SURANSKY: Versus in math

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here are the areas of strength and weakness--

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay.

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SHAEL SURANSKY: --and specific

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feedback on each.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. Now,

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do you, do you believe that there is too much test prep going on in our schools?

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SHAEL SURANSKY: What I said

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earlier is that one of our goals is to make sure

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that every classroom kids are engaged and

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challenged and there's a rigorous curriculum, and

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it's focused on getting kids the basic skills and

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the higher order skills that they need.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Right.

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SHAEL SURANSKY: And where people

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take the route of test prep, it's a kneejerk

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reaction that is a representation of weak teaching

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and weak leadership, and that's one of the things

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that we're looking at in the quality review. That

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said, I don't think any parent would be satisfied

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if their kid doesn't know how to read, doesn't

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know how to add. And these tests to measure those

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2 basic skills in important ways, and we need to
3 make sure that kids meet that. I don't think it's
4 test prep to teach kids those basic skills.

5 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Right. You
6 know, and I, I agree with you, and I was listening
7 to your response again, and I heard your response
8 earlier. And, but still and all, considering the
9 fact that my colleagues have said, and you've
10 heard from advocates, there's too much test prep
11 going on, I guess you're the Deputy Chancellor for
12 performance, Division of Performance and
13 Accountability, so you have a broader perspective.
14 And so, is your answer yes there is too much test
15 prep going on? Or the answer is no there is not?
16 I'm trying to get a very simple answer so that I
17 can understand.

18 SHAEL SURANSKY: The answer, the
19 answer is, in general, no, there is not. And
20 there are specific cases where schools are taking
21 that route inappropriately, but in general, no,
22 there is not.

23 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay.
24 [background noise] Do you believe, based on the
25 graduation rates, and you showed that chart going

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2 back from, I think going back and coming forward,
3 and my colleague Lew Fidler asked, "Why are you
4 only using stats from 2006 in certain areas?" and
5 you explained that. Do you believe, based on
6 everything you know, with the budget the way it
7 is, and with the reconfiguration of test scores,
8 and with now all students I believe as of this
9 year, ninth graders coming in, every student has
10 to pass at least what, five Regents Exams in order
11 to graduate from high school.

12 SHAEL SURANSKY: Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Is the
14 graduation rate in your opinion, based on all
15 things considered, going up or going to be going
16 down in the future? And give me a realistic
17 answer.

18 SHAEL SURANSKY: I honestly think
19 that we're going to see it go up. And well, the
20 reason I think that is that the State has been
21 phasing in their requirements steadily, so it
22 started with on, one Regents Exam at 65 and four
23 at 55; the next year it was two; this year it's
24 three. And each of the years so far we've seen
25 modest increases of between two and three percent.

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2 And so I think that if the pattern holds, we'll
3 likely see those modest increases continue. And I
4 think it's a, it's partially because when kids
5 know what a standard is, when you put a higher
6 standard in front of them, and this is one of the
7 powerful things we've been talking about with the
8 common core standards, they rise to meet that
9 challenge. Now, when we look at the kinds of
10 tasks that we're going to ask kids to do, over
11 these next four years, like I was talking about,
12 that are deeper essays, research papers, much more
13 writing, I think if we did nothing right now, we
14 would see graduation rates go down. We have to
15 work hard with teachers and schools in order to
16 equip them to be successful. The good news is,
17 the state isn't phasing that in gradually, and so
18 there's time to build that capacity, and I think
19 that we are well, we're well on our way to doing
20 that.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Now, you are,
you heard my colleague, I believe it was Danny
Dromm mention about the fact that of these 37-and-
a-half minutes, I think there's going to be more
collaboration or more, you know, teaching--not

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2 more teaching--

3 SHAEL SURANSKY: Teacher teams?

4 FEMALE VOICE: Schools?

5 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Yeah, you
6 said schools can elect to have a more, a situation
7 where teachers are collaborating with each other.

8 SHAEL SURANSKY: Mm-hmm.

9 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Do you think
10 that there is a need to have more teacher and
11 student time for teaching and learning? Because
12 it appears as though, because of professional
13 development and other collaborative situations,
14 there may be less time as far as contact, with
15 students and teachers. Am I right or wrong in
16 that assessment? And then do you feel there
17 should be more students and teacher time as far as
18 teaching and learning going on in the classroom?19 SHAEL SURANSKY: Yeah, I think the,
20 the more time we have with kids, the better. One
21 of the things you see, if you look
22 internationally, that other countries are spending
23 about a month longer in their school year than,
24 than the United States is. And if you look at
25 some of the charter schools that are not bound by

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the Union contract, they have longer days and longer schools years. We have some interesting models that have figured out, for example, Ellis Prep up in, up in The Bronx, they do an extra term in July, pulling together their summer school money and other pieces of their budget, in order to have every kid go to school for an extra month. And so there are ways to do this, and I think it's something that we'd love to brainstorm about the challenges, every time you, you increase the amount of time, there's a cost to it.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Sure.

SHAEL SURANSKY: And so, doing that is complicated. Now, to you first question about the balance between the afterschool tutoring and the team, the teams meeting, teachers need to have opportunities to learn from each other. That's how they grow. And we have teachers, we're paying, most of our budget, like 85 percent of our budget goes to teacher salaries. And that's paying not for like the little bit of time after school, that's paying for those 27-and-a-half hours a week. And what good educators know, is that when you have teachers work together,

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2 especially if there's a strong teacher in that
3 group, it spreads to all the teachers. And when
4 people start to share effective practices, and
5 when they start to talk about kids, and they get
6 to know kids well, to Councilman Dromm's point
7 earlier, that, that improves their instruction in
8 every part of the day, including the afterschool
9 program. So, I would gladly allocate time for
10 teachers to increase their capacity in order to
11 make sure that we're using the time we've got with
12 kids better. That said, if we can find more
13 resources and negotiate plans to extend the year
14 or extend the day, I think that's also an
15 important goal.

16 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.

17 I'm going to turn to two of our colleagues that
18 have questions, but--You weren't with us when we
19 met with DOE officials and Josh was with us, and I
20 advised Josh and other staff members to make sure
21 they ate lunch before the hearing. I didn't take
22 my own advice.

23 SHAEL SURANSKY: [laughs]

24 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: So, I have
25 this, having some soup on the side because I had

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2 not eaten lunch whatsoever. So next time I have
3 to take my own advice.

4 SHAEL SURANSKY: [laughs]

5 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: But let me
6 turn to my colleague, Steve Levin, and then we'll
7 turn to Council Member Lew Fidler for a follow up.
8 St--Steve Levin from Brooklyn.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you,
10 Mr. Chairman. Are we on here? Thank you very
11 much. My question, first question, I have three
12 questions. Follow up on a point that Council
13 Member Weprin raised earlier, with regard to test
14 prep and, and cheating that's going on. Can you
15 reiterate what is, what's, what's the method that
16 DOE is currently using on testing from three to
17 eight, what is, what's the methodology, what's the
18 rubric that DOE is using to ensure that cheating
19 is not going on, on these tests?

20 SHAEL SURANSKY: So, the 3-8
21 testing program, there are monitors that go out
22 during the time that the tests are being given,
23 and visit hundreds of classrooms during the
24 periods. And they're, it's random, schools don't
25 know when they're coming or whether they're going

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2 to be visited. And so that creates a strong guard
3 against during the actual administration of the
4 test, there being inappropriate behaviors. And
5 frankly, you know, while there are some small
6 cases, small number of cases that are reported and
7 substantiated each year, what we found is that
8 teachers take this responsibility really, really
9 seriously, and they actually are very professional
10 about it. And when they see something going
11 wrong, they often report it themselves, without us
12 having to find it. So that's on the actual
13 administration of the test.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay. I
15 mean--

16 SHAEL SURANSKY: Let me finish.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay.

18 SHAEL SURANSKY: So, then the, the
19 tests are, are graded centrally. So, no one in
20 the 3-8 level is grading the test in the school.
21 We have test grading centers where we pull people
22 together and they're monitored by managers who
23 oversee that process. And each test is graded by
24 multiple people. That's at the 3-8 level.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, as

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Council Member Weprin pointed out, it, okay, so you send out a monitor to a classroom, right? While the class, while the test is being given. They walk in, they don't see anybody talking to each other, and they assume that no cheating is occurring. But I, I imagine that if you're going to cheat, you're going to be a little smarter about it [laughter] than to, than to do it when the monitor is there.

SHAEL SURANSKY: You know, the, the controller did an audit around this last year, and found not one instance of cheating that they could substantiate. So, I mean, you can theorize and it's, it's impossible for me to prove you wrong--

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: But my point--

SHAEL SURANSKY: --the truth is that--

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: My question--

SHAEL SURANSKY: --there isn't evidence that there's a pattern of that.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: But my question is--my, my question is that, as Council

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2 Member Weprin again pointed out, you know,
3 there's, there's different ways of doing it,
4 there's, there's, you can get very creative if you
5 want to cheat. Right? So, the, the method that
6 DOE is using is, is not, it's not looking at, at
7 it systemically at all. You're going in and
8 checking to see if kids are talking to each other
9 during the, or tests are instructing kids how to
10 fill out the bubble. But it's not, there's no, it
11 doesn't, is there a plan that you--

12 SHAEL SURANSKY: I'm sure we'll be
13 doing.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Is there a
15 plan--well, I don't know, that's up to you guys.
16 It's internal controls.

17 SHAEL SURANSKY: Well, we believe
18 that, and the Comptroller concurred that we have a
19 good system in place, so--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Well, but
21 there's no, what I'm saying is that there, you're
22 not telling me any broad systemic--how are you
23 working with the principals? Is there a, is there
24 a--I mean, there's - -

25 SHAEL SURANSKY: There's, there's

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2 very extensive guidelines around test security,
3 who has access to the booklets, when they have
4 access to the booklets.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: No, I'm
6 talking about guiding--

7 SHAEL SURANSKY: What, what happens
8 during the testing time.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: I'm not
10 talking--I'm not talking about that.

11 SHAEL SURANSKY: All of these memos
12 are public.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: I'm talking
14 about--I'm not talking about, I'm talking about
15 guiding the principals on how to deal with the
16 pressures that DOE is putting on principals, on
17 teachers, about test scores, how do you deal with
18 that, without slipping into the pressures or
19 succumbing the pressures by, by, you know,
20 cheating is a gray skill, it's not a black and
21 white issues, it's a gray skill issue. And, and
22 sometimes even teachers can convince themselves,
23 the principals can convince themselves, that
24 they're not encouraging cheating, when in fact
25 they actually are. What I'm trying to say is

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2 that, does DOE have a, a more comprehensive look
3 at this? Instead of looking, you know, doing this
4 kind of pinpoint check and seeing whether or not,
5 you know, like a parachute drop and you're not
6 necessarily going to see it. You're not going to
7 see it that way.

8 SHAEL SURANSKY: I'll send you the
9 Comptroller's report and then we should discuss it
10 further.

11 JOSH THOMASES: I mean, I think
12 the, the large question embedded in this, and
13 we've been talking about it in a bunch of ways, is
14 this question of, where and how and if the tests
15 have value. Right? And the, the core of the, the
16 concerns that have been raised has been saying,
17 essentially, that because the state rated the
18 proficiency bar, it, it doesn't have value, or it
19 has minimal value, and that it distracts from the
20 core instruction. And I guess from those who know
21 my history, a couple of whom are in the audience,
22 know that, that in the '90s I was part of group of
23 schools that, that advocated not to have Regents
24 Exams. And I'll, and I'll tell you part of the
25 challenge, and I'll tell you as candidly as I know

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2 how, which is that in one of our early graduating
3 classes, we had one of our top students who did
4 not pass out of remediation requirements at CUNY.
5 And the chall--and we were one, we're one of the
6 schools, if you look at sort of the beats an--beat
7 the odds analysis, you look at, we're one of the
8 schools that does the best work with some of the
9 most struggling students. And the heart of the
10 challenge is, is how do we have some mechanism,
11 however imperfect, for comparing and understanding
12 where are schools that are actually getting the
13 meaningful gains or not. And the challenge of
14 cheating, I mean, I don't know much about higher
15 ed, but I read the articles in the newspaper about
16 how, you know, every university in this country is
17 trying to figure out how to get an honest essay
18 out of their kids rather than going, than the kids
19 going online and get it. So, there's a national
20 challenge.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Right,
22 right, no I understand, but that's, that's, those
23 are essays, those are college essays, you're
24 dealing with the--you know, that, that's a
25 different issue, and I appreciate that testing,

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2 some testing has some value, I'm not saying that
3 it's an entirely bogus thing. What I'm saying is,
4 what I'm wondering is, what's DOE do internally to
5 disincentivise the--the insidious type of
6 cheating. Not, not the, not the, you know, the
7 looking at, you know, there are kids talking to
8 each other during the testing. The insidious type
9 of cheating that is created by the pressures that
10 DOE places because of these test scores, on
11 teachers and on principals.

12 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: And I'll
14 move on to the next question, 'cause--

15 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Yeah, well,
16 no, yeah, you got to move onto the next--I'm going
17 to let him respond, you have, there's another
18 question, because I have to turn to my colleague
19 Lew Fidler, then I have to come back to questions,
20 and we've been hammering this one question for
21 like six minutes already.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, sorry,
23 okay, so I'm going to--

24 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: So, is, is
25 there a specific answer to his, his question that

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you can answer very simply?

SHAEL SURANSKY: We take, we take any instance of cheating extremely seriously, we have very strong systems in place, they're very public and very well documented. I'd invite you to examine them before you pursue this further.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay. And-- all right, so I'm going to just move on to one, one more question.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay, go ahead.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: With regard, excuse me, to--with regard to the NAEP tests, this issue of, 'cause we're comparing, in your presentation, we're going back to the '80s to make comparisons in terms of graduation rate, and everything, we're going back ten years, we're going back 20 years. There's, there's been a significant increase in the last seven years where in New York City, New York City students have been granted accommodations on the name test, going from when, with regard to the reading test, eight to 24 percent of New York City students in the last seven years, this is during this Mayor's

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2 Administration, on the math test, from twelve to
3 28 percent, accommodations help students on the
4 test. They, they will, you know, sometime, I
5 mean, I'm not going to whether or not they're
6 warranted, what I'm wondering is, what's, how do
7 you, how do you account for the dramatic increase?
8 How do you, it's, it's not whether or not it's
9 warranted but why it's grown so much.

10 SHAEL SURANSKY: One of the reasons
11 is that ELL kids were not previously tested at the
12 same level that they started testing a few years
13 back, because there was a federal policy change in
14 terms of when kids should be tested, who were
15 language learners. The accommodations are monitored
16 closely by NAEP and are fully sort of in line with
17 the state regulations, and so I think it's, it's
18 only appropriate that a kid who has a learning
19 disability, or a kid who has an Eng--who is an
20 English language learner, would have
21 accommodations attendant to, to those that they
22 have a right to.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: So it's
24 only, those are the only--

25 SHAEL SURANSKY: Yeah.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: --groups of
3 kids that, that, so that, that's what's accounting
4 entirely for that, that entire increase?

5 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Is it, is it
6 only ELL? Or is--

7 SHAEL SURANSKY: And special ed.

8 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: That's it?

9 SHAEL SURANSKY: Yeah.

10 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. So if
11 we asked the State that same question, they're
12 going to give us the same response?

13 SHAEL SURANSKY: I hope so.

14 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay, well
15 we're going to ask him when he comes up.

16 SHAEL SURANSKY: Yeah.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you,
18 Mr. Chairman.

19 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.
20 Council Member Lew Fidler, then I'm going to, to
21 wind up with my questions.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: You know,
23 Council Member--

24 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Speak into
25 the mic, Council Member, we know you can speak up.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: - - Council
3 Member Lander, you know, speaks very highly of
4 both of you, so I feel a little bit guilty taking
5 a second whack here. I mean, I know somebody's
6 got to be the designated piñata, and I appreciate
7 your, your patience with me.

8 SHAEL SURANSKY: It's a good
9 conversation.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: It would've
11 been very disheartening had you answered the
12 Chairman's question about whether or not you think
13 graduation rates are going to go up or not with a
14 negative answer. So, I guess I'm, I'm thankful
15 that you didn't do that, and frankly I would've
16 been shocked had you said, "Yeah, Chairman, I
17 think they're going to down." A number of years
18 ago, maybe three I'm guessing, we had a hearing of
19 these Committee that discussed credit recovery in
20 terms of graduation rates. Now, we were promised
21 that there would be some standardization of credit
22 recovery procedures and policies, and some
23 accountability in data tracking for how often
24 credit recovery was being used vis-à-vis
25 graduation rates. Has any of that happened, and

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2 do you have any of that data?

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SHAEL SURANSKY: Yeah, so, last year, the state finalized their guidelines on credit recovery, and in response to that we put in place a system to begin to track that. And so at the end of this year, I'd be happy to come back and give you a full accounting on how many kids use credit recovery.

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: So, so as of now, that system is not yet in place.

SHAEL SURANSKY: It's in place, but the data has not been gathered as a result of this being the first year, the first full year that those guidelines are in place.

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: So, so this is the first year--let me rephrase it.

SHAEL SURANSKY: I can get you data for the school year.

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: You could, you could've had, you could've, before the State put in guidelines, and thank god they did, I, you could have been tracking how often this was being done, you know, in our school system. Have you done it before now? Or as you, are you just

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2 beginning now?

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SHAEL SURANSKY: We created the system this past winter. It was also one of the things I told principals about in the memo that I mentioned earlier.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: So, you'll have, at the end of this school year, you'll have data for last year and this year.

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SHAEL SURANSKY: We'll have, we'll have, the system was created in the winter, and it's, this is the first full year of implementation. We may have partial data for last year, but we'll have a full year of data for this year.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: I'd be very interested in seeing it--

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SHAEL SURANSKY: Definitely.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: --and I'm going to be very interested in seeing it on an ongoing basis.

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SHAEL SURANSKY: Definitely.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: I know that many of us believe that it has impacted on graduation rates in a rather arbitrary and

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capricious fashion.

SHAEL SURANSKY: Well, if it did, then we're going to take that very seriously, and so--

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Well, we won't really know.

SHAEL SURANSKY: No, we will. Because we'll, we'll--

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Well, no.

SHAEL SURANSKY: --we'll be able to share exactly who got it and how many, and which schools.

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Now, frankly, the reports that we've gotten, the reports that I've heard from, from teachers and administrators, is that it is being used much, much, much more heavily today than it was when I was in high school, or ten years ago. And then that would've impacted that, you know, the chart's not up now--

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: The graduation rate.

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: The graduation rate chart.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Yeah.

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SHAEL SURANSKY: Well, let's look

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at it.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: We will,

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thank you.

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JOSH THOMASES: And Councilman, if

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I may, just, I want to be very clear around the,

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the college ready issue. And related to the

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Regents, and just name the challenge that we have.

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The current, the standards that the State is

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setting of the 65 on the Regents, our research is

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showing is actually insufficient. That, first of

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all, to get out of remediation at CUNY you need a

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75 on the Regents exams, and for now math you need

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a 75 on one and a 65 on another. That the data

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shows that at the point at which a student scores

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an 85 on the math and English Regents, and it's

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really focused on the math and English, which, as

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sort of core competency tests connected to being

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able to read and do math, obviously. That at the

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point at which you get 85 is where you get really

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sustained outcomes at CUNY. So when we talk about

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the challenge in front of us, that is the

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challenge.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: So you're then advocating for increasing the standard even further?

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SHAEL SURANSKY: Well, I'm saying that to, to--if we're going to be serious about the college and career ready standard in the City, then we need to be candid acr--about what that challenge means, vis-à-vis where, where the standards are.

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SHAEL SURANSKY: And we are, we are going to increase--

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COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: I'm supposed, I'm supposed to be the politician here, so--

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JOSH THOMASES: I'm not trying to be political.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: I'm going to say that's a yes--

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JOSH THOMASES: I'm told you were, but--[laughs]

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COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: I'm saying that's yes, you're saying that 85 is where it should be for the standard that, that you're aspiring to, so you must be advocating or - - the

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2 standard.

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JOSH THOMASES: So the reason why I'm, I'm not trying to be political about it. The reason why I'm, I'm--

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: And we don't want you to be political, we want you to be realistic, and that's what you're saying, that's important.

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JOSH THOMASES: The reason why I'm cautious on that, is because we don't know where the State's changes in the assessment systems are, and so, and the changes in the assessment system are supposed to do, aim them towards ever more, the more complicated tasks we talked about earlier. So I want to go on record now about an assessment I don't know. What I'm saying to you is, is that our challenge in the City is, is moving towards a higher standard than what currently is represented by 65.

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SHAEL SURANSKY: I will go on record, though, and say that we're going to start piloting college readiness measures keyed in to the CUNY requirements on the progress report this year. And so we will be measuring, and you will

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2 have data on whether or not students are meeting
3 that benchmark, and that schools will be held
4 accountable for it.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: This
6 Council Member will, will never challenge you on
7 raising standards. I just think having read, I
8 guess about a week ago in the paper that one of
9 Brooklyn's, by reputation, finest high schools,
10 Leon Goldstein, had to cancel its AP classes for
11 all of its kids, I believe, in, in every subject,
12 that's kind of inconsistent with where we're
13 trying to go. I mean, I think that, that was one
14 of the saddest things I've read about our
15 education system in a while. I mean, my kid, you
16 know, my kids both went to Edward R. Morrow, both
17 enjoyed many, many, many AP classes, it benefited
18 them extraordinarily in college. To find out that
19 the kids going to Goldstein will not have that
20 opportunity this year, I think is incredibly sad
21 and DOE ought to intervene in it right now.

22 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: [off mic]

23 Thank you.

24 JOSH THOMASES: And we're doing
25 every--I mean, the challenge of the budget cuts

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2 are real. Know that nat--across the State, part
3 of the conversations with the State and, have been
4 around figuring out how to make some courses
5 available online, because rural districts are
6 losing their teachers for the AP courses due to
7 cuts. So, so, I will look directly into that
8 specific problem. But we, we discussed the
9 monetary challenge earlier, and it is what it is.

10 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.

11 Okay, now, advocates claim that there are now 369
12 schools, approximately 36 percent of all the
13 schools, where two-thirds or more students are not
14 meeting the proficiency standards in ELA, compared
15 to five schools in 2009. Is, is that statistic
16 correct? If it is, say yes.

17 SHAEL SURANSKY: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: If it's not,
19 say no.

20 SHAEL SURANSKY: Under the new
21 proficiency, yes.

22 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: And then
23 please, what is your response to that, overall.

24 SHAEL SURANSKY: I think that the,
25 it highlights the challenge that, yes.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay.

SHAEL SURANSKY: I think that, that's basically accurate. I haven't looked at the exact data, but given the new proficiency marks, that, that's consistent with what I know. And I think that this is the conversation we've been having all afternoon, and all of the steps that we've outlined are particularly focused on the places where we're most worried about where there are more kids that are at Level I and Level II, and they tend to be the schools that previously had more Level I and Level II, and so there's already more resources focused in that direction.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Now, has the Department of Education made a concerted effort to reach out specifically to the parents whose children are disproportionately affected by the new proficiency standards, and if so, how?

JOSH THOMASES: We've, we've asked schools to do the core of that outreach, and superintendents in their meetings with community education counsel. So, the, the heart of the conversations have started there. And then, where

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2 there, we've asked both superintendent and network
3 leaders to flag for us places where we're
4 concerned about. Where they're, you know, the,
5 the most challenging responses that would come of
6 this is where faculty, principal and parents start
7 all blaming each other, and the school ends up
8 fighting with each other rather than working
9 together to figure out what they need to change.
10 So we've called that question and been asked to be
11 apprised of it. But the, the heart of this is a
12 conversation between the school and the parents.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Do you know,
I mean that's a, a general answer, you gave me the
direction, but I, I want to know, for example, has
a principal called a meeting at the school where
this was discussed specifically? Or was a letter
sent out to every parent from the school about
that?

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JOSH THOMASES: So there was a--
Sorry.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: And that's--
what, what measurement, if you're now oversight,
of whether or not their local school
administration is communicating to the parents

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2 about this situation, you know, what proof is
3 there?

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JOSH THOMASES: So, so there was a
5 letter sent out by the Chancellor that was
6 backpacked home over the summer, to those students
7 who had backpacks and were in schools over the
8 summer. And then--

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SHAEL SURANSKY: [off mic] It was -

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JOSH THOMASES: And then we asked
12 principals who were not, whose schools were not in
13 session at the point at which we had the
14 information about the test scores, to backpack, to
15 provide that letter on the first day of school.
16 We asked networks and superintendents to work with
17 schools to make sure that in the first couple
18 weeks of schools there was the September School
19 Leadership Team Meeting where this was discussed,
20 and encouraged schools to have their parent
21 meetings in September. We didn't mandate parent
22 meetings, but assume that many, many, if, if not
23 most will. What we requested back, and this data
24 is still coming in, and it's anecdotal data, is
25 for superintendents and network leaders to flag

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2 for us places where they're concerned about the
3 quality of the communication. So, if, to be
4 concrete, if a superintendent went to a CEC
5 meeting, and there were parents from a particular
6 school saying, "We don't anything of what's going
7 on in our school," then that's the kind of
8 information that's being gathered by my office.
9 And then we're going to be working with the Office
10 of Family Engagement and Advocacy, as well as our
11 superintendents and our networks to make sure that
12 meetings happen in those schools. Where, where
13 appropriate and you're hearing that information,
14 as well, would encourage you to work with our
15 office that faces you, would ask you to highlight
16 for us where your, where your hearing that
17 information. I'm very clear that schools that end
18 up fighting, a school that ends up fighting with
19 itself about this, is not going to end up
20 benefiting the kids. So, if you've gotten a dozen
21 calls from a particular school, please let Lenny
22 know and we'll get that information and get to
23 working with you on it.

24 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Yeah, I have
25 not, but I'm asking the question, as far as

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2 accountability, to ensure that the communication
3 has occurred. And you've laid out what the
4 framework is, but you, I don't know whether or not
5 in reality that has occurred. So what I'm going
6 to do is I'm going to have my staff to reach out
7 to ten different parents association throughout
8 the City, or a dozen, to see if in fact that it's
9 occurred--

10 JOSH THOMASES: Great.

11 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: --and what
12 method has that occurred via a large meeting,
13 whether or not something went home, or what.

14 JOSH THOMASES: Okay. And then, I
15 mean, we're doing the same on our side and then we
16 can--

17 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay.

18 JOSH THOMASES: --compare notes.
19 But--

20 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay, good.
21 Can you explain how that the State ELA and math
22 test scores are used to evaluate schools, if at
23 all? And are there plans to change the
24 reconfiguration of the progress reports?

25 SHAEL SURANSKY: Yeah, so, on the

1 elementary and middle school progress report, I
2 think the Committee's fairly familiar with it, I
3 don't go into the details. But the progress
4 report measures both progress and performance.
5 And so, performance is what we've been discussing
6 a lot today, how many kids have met the
7 proficiency mark. Since we started the progress
8 report, we've always believed that progress was
9 much more important, and it's not about how many
10 kids got over that line, but how much growth was
11 there for each kid? And so, 60 percent of the
12 grade is based on growth. And it doesn't actually
13 matter where the State sets the bar, it's based on
14 looking at how much growth was there year-to-year,
15 and there's been a substantial change this year in
16 how we measure that growth, to make it more
17 precise and more stable. And so, we are comparing
18 each kid to other kids who started at the same
19 point they did, and then we're looking at what
20 happened to them at the next year. And if they
21 went up or if they went down, and we compare them
22 only to kids who started at the same point they
23 did. Because part of what you had raised, and
24 others had raised, was a concern that kids who
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2 were at the higher end of the spectrum, could not
3 make progress after a certain point. And that
4 wasn't fair to them, because it was harder to make
5 progress as you got higher. And so, we've made it
6 much more precise in response to that concern.
7 And I think you'll see, the progress reports are
8 coming out soon for elementary and middle schools.
9 I think you'll see that the outcomes are, in
10 addition to the State raising the bar, we've also
11 raised the bar, and we, as I mentioned earlier,
12 are starting to gather data so that we can broaden
13 the base of measurement, so that we also take into
14 account teacher evaluations of student work. And
15 so, we'll be looking at, first with middle
16 schools, the grades that teachers are giving in
17 science and social studies, in English and in
18 math, which is a way to sort of broaden the
19 streams of data that we're looking at as part of
20 that assessment.

21 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: So, so then,
22 I can assume then that when As and Bs come out and
23 A, B, Cs and F, that 97 percent of the schools
24 will not have an A and B.

25 SHAEL SURANSKY: We heard you loud

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2 and clear.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: No, I'm just,
I'm curious--

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SHAEL SURANSKY: No, I--

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I'm
wondering. I, I mean--

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SHAEL SURANSKY: And, and again, I
keep on referring back to the communication to the
principals in the winter.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay.

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SHAEL SURANSKY: But we were
explicit that that would change, that we were
raising the bar, that the top 25 percent of
schools are going to get As this year.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Now, can you,
can you tell me, and us as a Committee, what is--
and pretty simply and, and as quickly as you can--
what is DOE's promotion policy? So for example,
are all Level I students automatically held back?
Or are all Level IIs in danger? And what about
their class work? What about teacher evaluation?
You've heard advocates in education say that
leaving a kid back is detrimental and will help
them more destined to drop out of school. So what

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2 is DOE's promotion policy as of September 27,
3 2010.

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5 SHAEL SURANSKY: So, if you score
6 Level I, you then have the opportunity to go to
7 summer school. And if you can improve your score
8 in summer school, then you don't get held back.
9 There's also, for kids that could, according to
10 the school, because their assessments of the kid's
11 work, despite the test scores, there's a portfolio
12 process that the schools can submit to look at
13 kids in that position. And--

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15 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: If they're
16 advocating for that kid to move forward, you're
17 saying.

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19 SHAEL SURANSKY: Right, and then
20 for kids who have learning disabilities, that
21 their IAP guides, and so depending on the IAP
22 goals, that would often override whether or not
23 the test score was a Level I or a Level II.

24

25 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: And with the,
with the student that is Level I that goes to
summer school--

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SHAEL SURANSKY: Mm-hmm.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: --you said if

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2 they do well, what--

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4 SHAEL SURANSKY: If they score a
5 Level II, or if the work that they do in summer
6 school, based on the portfolio that the school
7 submits, reaches Level II. Part of the reason we
8 saw the big increase was the new standard; the
9 other part is that we phased in fourth and sixth
10 grade this year for promotional policies that
11 didn't exist in prior years.

11

[pause]

12

13 JOSH THOMASES: Chairman, there's a
14 real tension in, in figuring out both the--taking
15 a stand around what quality looks like to move to
16 the next grade, which, you know, as I think we've
17 heard over and over in this room, there's, you
18 know, the support for higher standards, and making
19 sure that students are given the opportunity to
20 demonstrate it using multiple measures. So if
21 they don't do it on the test, then having the
22 opportunity to appeal. But the, you know, the,
23 the heart of the stance to say that if you're not
24 doing the quality work, you can't move ahead, is,
25 you know, what was said earlier around CUNY, CUNY
saying, "Well, the presidents of CUNY are blaming

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2 the high schools," while the principals of high
3 schools blame middle schools, middle schools blame
4 elementary schools, and elementary schools blame
5 the parents, in the most cynical versions of this
6 story, right? And so, what we're trying to do is
7 figure out how to move, so that we're all
8 responsible for saying, "When students leave here,
9 they're ready for the next level." And, and
10 that's the heart of, of the promotion challenge.
11 And it's very difficult work and, and always will
12 be, really.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: When kids are
held back, or when they're performing at a level
that is not up to par, what, what specific help
are they going to get? And I ask that question
based on the report by Juan Gonzalez, report by
"Class Size Matters," that a, a letter of
agreement was reached between the Mayor, not the
Mayor, the Chancellor and David Steiner, the
Commissioner of Education, basically allowing the
City of New York to only, that's only mandated to
give students that are performing at Level I
academic intervention, intervention services;
whereas previously all those scoring at Level I

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2 and II were entitled to. And now, it says that
3 the only ones that you must give academic
4 intervention services is to Level I. How can, how
5 could, how could you, and I say "you," the
6 Department of Education, ask to do less?

7 SHAEL SURANSKY: We did not,
8 that's--

9 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Which--one
10 second, let me finish.

11 SHAEL SURANSKY: [interposing] I
12 think just to clarify, though, that the--

13 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Let me finish
14 the question, and you can clarify.

15 SHAEL SURANSKY: Okay.

16 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: How could
17 you, in my opinion, ask to do less, when our
18 children need more? Okay, go ahead, Deputy
19 Chancellor.

20 SHAEL SURANSKY: We certainly did
21 not request to do less. The, the State of its own
22 accord, separate from us, and separate from any
23 arrangement with New York City, this applies to
24 New York State as a whole, when they decided to
25 change the proficiency marks without providing

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2 additional resources to districts across the
3 State, have revised their language on their
4 requirements for academic intervention. And the,
5 I think the report that you're referencing had
6 more to do with class size, than--and, and there
7 there was an agreement to focus on the schools
8 that had the highest need kids, and focus on class
9 size targets first, in those schools, given the
10 multiple billions of, of budget cuts that the
11 systems endured over the past two years. But, I
12 think we, we've been really clear today that we
13 consider any kid that is not meeting standards, or
14 a kid who drops significantly, as a kid that needs
15 support. And academic intervention occurs in
16 multiple ways, it occurs through really strong
17 small group work, it occurs through the good use
18 of that time after school, it occurs through
19 creating opportunities for, for kids to, to get
20 conferencing within the regular classroom, doing
21 team teaching, which we've been pushing in our
22 special ed initiative. So there's a lot of
23 different angles that we're trying to attack this
24 from. But we certainly are not asking for the
25 State to give us less, for, for those Level I and

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Level II kids.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I think clearly the communication and your responses here today, all indicate exactly what you just said, without a doubt. So, let me go back to, you're saying that the New York City Department of Education, or its agents, did not advocate for a reduction in the, the children, that are Level II, so you're not mandated to give them academic intervention, intervention services. That's what I'm hearing.

SHAEL SURANSKY: That's correct.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay.
Because I'm going to ask--

SHAEL SURANSKY: Yeah, and Ira's here, and I think he can tell you--

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I'm going to ask. I'm going to ask, because--

SHAEL SURANSKY: Good.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: --the bottom line, you would agree, that based on the reconfiguration, based on the goals, as far as college readiness or employment ready, that our children are going to need a lot more services.

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2 You agree with that?

3 JOSH THOMASES: I think, Chair--

4 SHAEL SURANSKY: We got to use the
5 time we've got really well, and I think that--6 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Increasing
7 over time.

8 JOSH THOMASES: That's right.

9 SHAEL SURANSKY: We can find--

10 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Because
11 sometimes you know there's just not enough time in
12 a day, you've heard that saying.

13 JOSH THOMASES: Right.

14 SHAEL SURANSKY: And, you know, we,
15 we'll continue to partner with you on resources.
16 You guys have been great supporters in the past,
17 and, you know, we hope that we can continue to
18 work with you on that. But that is the question
19 when it comes to more time.20 JOSH THOMASES: And I think,
21 Chairman, Chairman, I would just reiterate that,
22 that the heart of what our push has been, is that
23 we have to, where the quality of instruction in
24 our classrooms is poor, we've got to focus on
25 that, rather than on additional services. That at

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2 the heart of it is that every parent in the City
3 starts interviewing to figure out which of the
4 teachers to get for their child. And it, we need
5 to get to a situation where they don't have to do
6 that anymore, because they're excited about
7 whoever, whoever's teaching the classes. And that
8 that, that's, that focus there, is, is the heart
9 of where we're trying to go. That's not to say
10 that there aren't students who need additional
11 supports, it is to say that the thing that we have
12 the most control over, and it's where we focused
13 our inquiry teamwork, is to say, "What's happening
14 during the 27 hours students are with their
15 regular teachers during the regular school day?
16 And I think if we strengthen that a lot, if we
17 were to strengthen that and have a top notch
18 teacher that any of us would be willing to send
19 our children to, in every classroom, we would see,
20 I don't, we would see dramatically different
21 outcomes.

22 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Now, you have
23 a lot of people that do statistics, and computers,
24 also, you punch the numbers in. Assuming that the
25 scores in 2011 mirror the 201 scores, how many

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2 additional students would have to be mandated to
3 attend summer school?

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5 SHAEL SURANSKY: I can get you that
6 data. I don't have it off the top of my head.

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7 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Much more
8 than in 2010?

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9 SHAEL SURANSKY: If it's exactly
10 the same, the kids that I mentioned earlier that
11 had been promoted, and we allowed to be promoted,
12 because we didn't have the--

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13 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: The did not
14 go forward, yeah, all of those group.

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15 SHAEL SURANSKY: But that is, is
16 not a huge number, and some of those kids no doubt
17 will have learning disabilities, and so they'll
18 have-- I mean, I don't, I don't know for sure, but
19 I could get you an estimate.

19

20 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: And what
21 about how much more money would DOE have to spend
22 on summer school in order to provide the services
23 for all these thousands and thousands of children?

23

24 SHAEL SURANSKY: I don't, I don't
25 anticipate that we're going to have huge increases
in the numbers of kids going to summer school, but

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2 we definitely will allocate the resources
3 necessary to serve them. And, you know, the, the
4 data from the summer, we had many, many more 3-8
5 kids going. And the, a lot of them had a very
6 successful experience, and we anticipate that
7 there will continue to be that level of service at
8 summer school. It may go up a little bit, may go
9 down. I mean, if we do our job right, it may go
10 down.

11 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Well, Deputy
12 Chancellor Suransky and Deputy Chief School
13 Officer for Accountability and Academics Thomases,
14 let me thank you both for coming in. I hope you
15 had lunch before I did. [laughter]

16 JOSH THOMASES: Took your advice,
17 Chairman, I had it, yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Yeah, I
19 didn't take my own advice. Next time I will. I
20 had to sneak my lunch while you were answering
21 questions to some of my colleagues. I thank you
22 both for coming in. And we look forward to
23 working with you to ensure that our children
24 receive the best education possible.

25 JOSH THOMASES: Thank you, sir.

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2 SHAEL SURANSKY: We look forward
3 to, to that, too.

4 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: And next
5 we're going to hear from Ira Schwartz, who is an
6 official with the New York State Education
7 Department, that's going to be giving us some
8 responses or comments about the 2010 test scores
9 and the reconfiguration of those test scores, and
10 why that occurred. So, Ira, welcome, I haven't
11 seen you in a while. It's good to have you.

12 IRA SCHWARTZ: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Would you
14 just identify yourself and your title, and you may
15 begin testimony that you may have. Obviously, we
16 prefer you not read the testimony, but just
17 summarize and talk to us about the 2010 test
18 scores, the reconfiguration, and what, you know,
19 who basically requested that, and what's the, the
20 impact on the children of New York State, and more
21 specifically, New York City.

22 IRA SCHWARTZ: Thank you,
23 Councilman Jackson. My name is Ira Schwartz, I am
24 Assistant Commissioner for Accountability with the
25 New York State Education Department. I am a

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2 product of the New York Public Schools and of the
3 State University of New York.

4 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Like me.

5 IRA SCHWARTZ: Yes. I began my
6 career as a teacher of English as a foreign
7 language, and was a teacher of English as a second
8 language before I joined the State Education
9 Department in 1981. I've had a variety of
10 positions at the State Education Department and my
11 office is located in Brooklyn, New York. If you
12 will indulge me, Councilman, I would like to read
13 my testimony, but you do have the slides and they
14 provide some substantially additional information
15 that you can look at as I present the text and I
16 apologize if there's any redundancy in it, but
17 after three hours of my colleagues testifying, I
18 think there might be a little bit of overlap with
19 what I had intended to say to you. So, with that
20 as a preamble, good afternoon Members of the New
21 York City Council Education Committee. I am
22 pleased to be here today on behalf of Chancellor
23 Meryll Tisch, the Board of Regents and
24 Commissioner David Steiner, to talk about the
25 Board of Regents' recent action to reset cut

1 scores for the state grades three to eight,
2 English language arts and mathematics assessments,
3 so that proficiency now is defined as a student
4 being on track to meet college and career ready
5 standards. My testimony today will describe why
6 the Regents took this step, how we're improving
7 the quality of State assessments, and how this
8 fits into the Board of Regents' education reform
9 agenda. Higher Education is essential to economic
10 competitiveness, citizenship and lifelong
11 learning. Individuals who complete more education
12 earn more over the course of their careers, and
13 pay more in taxes. Harvard economist Larry Katz
14 and Claudia Goldin, in their 2008 book, "The Race
15 Between Education and Technology," demonstrate the
16 effect of education on lifetime earnings, which
17 has in turn contributed to American global
18 economic competitiveness, and to the wellbeing of
19 our state. In the last decade, research conducted
20 by Achieve, as well as others, shows a convergence
21 in the expectations of employers and colleges in
22 terms of the knowledge and skills high school
23 grads needs to be successful after high school.
24 Nearly eight in ten future job opportunities in
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2 the next decade in the United States will require
3 post-secondary education or training. 45 percent
4 will be in middle skills occupations, which
5 require at least some post-secondary education and
6 training, while 33 percent will be in high skilled
7 occupations for which a bachelor's degree or more
8 is required. By contrast, only 22 percent of
9 future job openings will be low skill and
10 accessible to those with a high school diploma, or
11 less. More and more, a post-secondary degree is a
12 prerequisite for employment. The U.S. Department
13 of Labor projects that between 2008 and 2018,
14 seven of the ten fastest growing occupations will
15 require a bachelor's degree or higher. Even as
16 corporations in the U.S. have been downsizing
17 manufacturing jobs, they have been having
18 difficulty finding persons to employ to operate
19 the next generation of sophisticated machinery.
20 Just think how much the job of repairing autos has
21 changed over the last few decades. What once was
22 a mechanical job is now largely a technical one,
23 dealing with computerized systems requiring a
24 higher level of literacy. I'm going to read
25 something to you from Cynthia Schmeiser, President

1
2 and Chief Operating Officer of ACT's Education
3 Division. ACT research shows that career
4 readiness requires the same level of foundational
5 knowledge and skills in mathematics and reading
6 that college readiness does. According to our
7 research, the majority of the jobs that require at
8 least a high school diploma pay a living wage for
9 a family of four are projected to increase in the
10 number, in the 21st Century, and provide
11 opportunities for career advancement, require a
12 level of knowledge and skills comparable to those
13 expected of first year college students. In other
14 words, even the good jobs that don't require a
15 post-secondary degree require college reading,
16 knowledge and skills. The United States has lost
17 its international position in recent years in
18 producing college graduates. Between 1995 and
19 2006, the U.S. college and university graduation
20 rate increased only marginally, while many of our
21 main economic competitors rates have soared. This
22 evidence is supported by a recent report from the
23 College Board that found that the proportion of 25
24 to 34 year olds, with college degrees in the U.S.,
25 was only twelfth among all developed countries.

1
2 Also, Gary Wilmason [phonetic] of Metro Metrics
3 found in 2006 that the demand of community college
4 reading were approximately at the same level as
5 entry level workforce requirements. We conclude
6 that the nations that out-educate us today will
7 outcompete us economically tomorrow. One reason
8 why our post-secondary graduation rates lagging
9 other nations is that many of our high school
10 graduates enter college under prepared to do
11 college work. A large proportion of students in
12 two and four year institutions take remedial
13 coursework. Nearly 33 percent of students in two
14 year colleges require remediation in math, and 20
15 percent of two year students require remediation
16 in reading or math. In some institutions, nearly
17 75 percent of entering students are not ready for
18 college and require some type of remediation.
19 These figures are for students who enroll in
20 college. There are many more who graduate high
21 school and do not enroll in college, because they
22 are not college ready at graduation. We know that
23 the more remedial courses a student must take upon
24 enrollment in college, the less likely that
25 student is to persist in college and graduate.

1
2 Given the data on the previous slide, the Board of
3 Regents asked the State Education Department staff
4 to determine the level of performance that
5 students must achieve to be well prepared to take
6 and pass first year English and mathematics
7 courses without the need for remediation.

8 Department staff spoke with Admissions directors
9 in many parts of the State. A clear consensus was
10 evident: students who score below a 75 on the
11 Regents examinations in English language arts and
12 mathematics are typically not prepared to succeed
13 in first year college courses. Admissions
14 directors indicate that a score of 500 is often
15 considered a benchmark for mathematics without,
16 for matriculation with remediation. And this is
17 on the SAT. However, only 19 percent of students
18 who scored below 75 on their English Regents exams
19 scored above 500 on the SAT reading. On the other
20 hand, over half of students who scored above 75
21 scored above 500 on the SAT. Similarly, 28
22 percent of students who scored below 80 on their
23 math Regents scored above 500 on the math SAT, but
24 over four-fifths of those who scored above 80 on
25 the Regents scored above 500 on the SAT. We would

1
2 expect that more students with score above 500 on
3 the math and the reading SAT, because average SAT
4 scores are higher in math, both nationally in New
5 York State. Students who succeed at high levels
6 on their Regents are well prepared for college
7 admission and success without remediation in
8 colleges and universities across the State. How
9 do we ensure that more students are well prepared
10 for college? One answer is to provide the proper
11 signal that students are on track for college
12 success to the students, their families, and their
13 schools. As I will discuss, the Regents have done
14 this by aligning the standards proficiency on the
15 State Assessments in grades three to eight,
16 English language arts and mathematics
17 examinations, with the college readiness standards
18 on the Regents examinations in these subjects. We
19 have strong, leading indicators of whether a
20 student will be able to succeed in college without
21 remediation. At CUNY institutions, students
22 scoring below an 80 on their math Regents are
23 likely to be placed into remedial, non-credit
24 bearing courses like arithmetic, elementary
25 algebra or intermediate algebra. Marginally

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2 proficient students scoring between 65 and 70 are
3 almost certain to be placed into remediation. On
4 the other hand, students who score above an 80
5 have a greater chance of being placed into credit
6 bearing courses than remedial ones. Once in
7 college, students who have scored above an 80 on
8 the math Regents exam have more than a 60 percent
9 chance of earning a C in their first college math
10 course. In other words, students who score at
11 above 80 on the Regents math exam, take more
12 challenging courses and do better in them than
13 students who are required to take less challenging
14 remedial courses. If student need a score of at
15 least 80 on the Regents in math examination to be
16 prepared for an introductory math course, then the
17 cut score for proficiency on the grade eight
18 mathematics exam should indicate that a student is
19 on track to be able to achieve a score of 80 on
20 the Regents math exam. The former eighth grade
21 assessment cut scores were insufficient to prepare
22 students for the Regents new deficient--new
23 definition of proficiency. Students at the cut
24 score for level III, which was 650, had less than
25 a 33 percent chance of earning an 80 on their math

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2 Regents exam just one or two years later. This
3 figure was even more disturbing in high need
4 districts. Marginally proficient eighth grade
5 students in these districts had less than a 20
6 percent chance of being college ready on their
7 Regents. By contrast, students who achieve the
8 new cut score of 673 on the grade eight
9 mathematics examination have a 75 percent chance
10 of achieving a college ready score of 80 or above
11 on the Regents math exam. The numbers were
12 slightly better for English language arts, but
13 still of concern. Students scoring at Level III
14 proficiency threshold in eight grade had a 66
15 percent probability of being ready to demonstrate
16 college preparation on their Regents. However,
17 marginally proficient eighth grade students in
18 high need districts had only slightly better than
19 a 50/50 shot of being college ready on their high
20 school Regents. While proficiency on the eighth
21 grade state math test shown in the blue line, had
22 increased dramatically over the past four years,
23 performance on the National Assessment of
24 Educational Progress, known as NAEP, called the
25 Nation's Report Card, has remained flat. The

1
2 NAEP, administered by the U.S. Education
3 Department to a sample of students in grades four,
4 eight and twelve around the state and the nation,
5 test students in math, reading, science and
6 writing among other subjects. The NAEP is
7 structured differently from the State assessments.
8 It is more comprehensive and similar to the
9 international assessments of skills that student
10 need to be successful in college in today's
11 workplace. Given the disparity between student
12 proficiency on the State tests and the NAEP, the
13 Regents recognized that the State assessments
14 needed to be revised to more resemble the NAEP.
15 The new proficiency standards are based on a
16 review of the research that analyzed how the grade
17 three to eight State assessments relate to the
18 national assessments of educational progress, how
19 the State's eighth grade math and English language
20 arts test relate to the Regents exams, how
21 performance on the Regents exams relate to the SAT
22 scores, and how performance on the Regents exams
23 relate to first year performance in college.
24 Eighth grade proficiency scores are now set at a
25 level that provides students at 75 percent chance

1
2 of earning a college ready Regents score. Third
3 to seventh grade proficiency scores are set so
4 that if a student makes a year's worth of
5 developmental growth, they will be on track for
6 college readiness. Thus, the Regents have
7 determined that college ready scores that students
8 need on the Regents exams in English language arts
9 and mathematics, aligned to the eighth grade
10 proficiency standards to these Regents scores, and
11 then worked backwards to link scores in grades
12 seven to three, to these new standards. In
13 addition to changing the definition of
14 proficiency, we are also working to improve the
15 quality of our assessments. Test questions can be
16 answered in one of three ways: learning a set of
17 strategies to answer test questions; adopting a
18 set of procedures to arrive at an answer; or
19 analyzing and synthesizing materials that require
20 deep mastery of the underlying content. A well
21 designed test asked students to bring to bear the
22 skills of applying a set of procedures to arrive
23 at an answer, as well as analyzing and
24 synthesizing materials. A poorly designed test
25 shades towards the first set of skills. Our

1
2 future test items will require that students
3 demonstrate more of the abilities that I
4 articulated in the second and third categories.
5 As we move forward, we will be making a number of
6 additional changes to strengthen our assessment
7 program, so that our exams will better measure how
8 students apply procedures and analyze and
9 synthesize information rather than demonstrate
10 simple test taking skills. These changes include
11 adding more items to the test to make them more
12 sensitive, increasing the performance indicators
13 tested to avoid having instruction focused
14 narrowly on only certain items of the curriculum,
15 and making the test items more varied to
16 discourage narrowly focused instructions.
17 Ensuring that assessment results provide
18 meaningful information about student progress is
19 just one element of the Regents' broader ambitious
20 reform agenda. To prepare students for success
21 beyond the twelfth grade, the Regents have
22 committed to raising standards and student
23 achievement by giving every student a world class
24 curriculum, that prepares them for college, the
25 global economy, 21st Century citizenship and

1
2 lifelong learning, preparing teachers and school
3 leaders to be more effective in classrooms, with
4 an emphasis on providing high needs schools the
5 best staff possible, building a world class data
6 system that tracks student performance from pre-K
7 through college graduation, closing chronically
8 underperforming schools and working with districts
9 to implement strategies to replace these schools,
10 and transforming SED from a compliance oriented
11 agency to a support oriented one. By raising the
12 standard for proficiency on the grade three to
13 eight ELA in math assessments, the Board of
14 Regents is taking an important step to ensure that
15 our State assessments provide the information
16 parents and teachers need to know whether their
17 children are on track for college and career
18 success. The four pillars of educational reform
19 in New York: improve curriculum and assessment,
20 more effective preparation for and support of
21 teachers and school leader; creation of a
22 comprehensive longitudinal data system; and
23 intervention in persistently lowest achieving
24 schools will enhance the interaction between the
25 teacher and the student in the classroom, which is

1
2 the key to improving educational outcomes in our
3 State. Thank you and I'm prepared to answer your
4 questions.

5 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Well, well I
6 want to thank you for bringing the testimony in
7 and, and reading it, because clearly by reading it
8 into the record, those that followed you like I
9 did, you save us the, the task of reading it. But
10 let me ask you a couple of questions if I, if I
11 may. You sat here and listened to the testimony,
12 questions and answers of the Department of
13 Education. Now, with regards to SED, some people
14 say that you have seen the huge jump in test
15 scores year after year. And wondering why did it
16 take so long for the State Education Department to
17 act, in order to basically hold everyone to a
18 higher standard so our children will be college
19 ready, or ready to go to, to work?

20 IRA SCHWARTZ: Councilman Jackson,
21 the State Assessment System in grades, for grades
22 three to eight was first instituted in 2005/6
23 school year, and that was the first time that we
24 began to test students in grades three to eight
25 each year. Previous to that, students were tested

1
2 only in grades four to eight. Initially, there
3 was an expectation that as teachers became more
4 familiar with the tests, that we would expect to
5 see improvements in those tests, particularly in
6 the first year, in 2006/2007. As the trend
7 continued into 2007 and then again into 2008/2009,
8 our new Chancellor, Merryl Tisch, as well as our
9 Commissioner, David Steiner, realized that there
10 was a need for an investigation into why these
11 change--why this trend was of the dimension that
12 we were seeing. As a result of that, they went to
13 our technical assistance group, they brought in
14 national experts who took approximately a year to
15 study the, the testing program, and come up with
16 their recommendations and their observations. And
17 as soon as that information was available to the
18 Commissioner and the Chancellor, they made it
19 available to the public and acted upon it.

20 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: So, in
21 essence, what are you saying to us? [laughter]

22 IRA SCHWARTZ: In essence, I am
23 saying that the, as we became aware of these
24 trends, we undertook a study to see why they were
25 occurring, and once we had the results of that

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2 study, we communicated it to the field. And, and
3 we are making changes to our assessments to
4 address it.

5 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: So, you're
6 saying that you acted as quickly as possible under
7 the new leadership of Chancellor Tisch and David
8 Steiner, the Commissioner of Education?

9 IRA SCHWARTZ: That is, that is
10 correct. In addition, we should say that there
11 are two issues here: there is the issue around
12 the raising of the cut scores, and then there are
13 issues around the changing of the tests. In terms
14 of the raising of the cut scores, that is also a
15 instance where we had additional data that allowed
16 us to track what was happening to students for the
17 first time, as they went into institutions of
18 higher education throughout New York State. And
19 as a result of that, we were better able to
20 determine that students who were scoring 65 on the
21 Regents exam, were not being well prepared for
22 college success.

23 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: So, somebody,
24 who is the State Education Department's Testing
25 Director.

1
2 IRA SCHWARTZ: That is David
3 Abrams, who's our Assistant Commissioner for
4 Assessment.

5 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: How long has
6 he been in that capacity?

7 IRA SCHWARTZ: I believe he has
8 been in that capacity approximately six years,
9 give or take a year or two.

10 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Now, you've
11 heard, maybe here today, overall, say that the
12 tests were getting easier and easier, or it's been
13 the same questions, basically, and that that's the
14 reason why students have, grades have increased.
15 What do you say about that as Assistant
16 Commissioner, knowing that in essence, based on
17 the reconfigurations, either the tests were, did
18 get easier and easier, or it was the same
19 questions? Because obviously the, the scores had
20 to be reconfigure from a realistic point of view,
21 to ensure that our children are ready to make the
22 grade when they enter college.

23 IRA SCHWARTZ: All right, the
24 questions were not the same questions, but the
25 questions were in many cases similar questions.

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And one of the things that, particularly this is a result, once again, of going to grade three to eight testing, where there was a narrower focus of the test on specific grade skills. And one of the things that we concluded is that the test did too narrowly sample from among the entire curriculum, and we are in the process of making changes to our assessment, so that they become less predictable, and that they more broadly sample from the full curriculum.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: So, is, is-- do you know whether or not SED plans on continuing David Abrams as the testing director, or is there going to be a change? I'm just asking the question. I don't know, I don't know about the individual's competency, but obviously, you know, if the tests that we've been, when I say "we," our students have been taking, are basically, you know, not at the level that they're, they should be, either one, he's recommending that the test should be harder, and the Board of Regents is not listening, or something's, something's going on there, and I just don't understand since I'm not in SED.

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2 IRA SCHWARTZ: The, those types of
3 decisions are ones that are made by the Board of
4 Regents and the Commissioner, that's outside of my
5 purview, but I have no reason to believe that the,
6 that the Regents and the Commissioner lack
7 confidence in Mr. Abrams.

8 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. Well
9 that, I'm glad to hear that, I, I believe your
10 assessment. But obviously the Commissioner and
11 the Chancellor and others knew that something had
12 to be done. So, something was wrong, you agree?

13 IRA SCHWARTZ: As I indicated, we
14 do believe that there are improvement
15 opportunities in our assessment program, and we
16 are moving forward to make those, those changes.

17 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: You've heard
18 the statement here earlier that was made, that the
19 students of New York City have made great
20 improvement strides in the, in their scores
21 statewide. And basically, I said that, that New
22 York City is not at the standard of the average
23 student in the State of New York. What's your
24 assessment as far as, has students in New York
25 City made great strides or they have increased a

1
2 little bit? And are the students in New York City
3 performing at the State average? And a true
4 assessment, don't give me any fluff, now, Mr.
5 Schwartz. I'm very serious, because this is a
6 serious hearing about truth, and about where we're
7 going.

8 IRA SCHWARTZ: The average
9 performance of New York City is somewhat less than
10 the average performance of school districts in--

11 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Yeah, you're
12 a diplomat, huh?

13 IRA SCHWARTZ: --in New York State.
14 The performance of New York City school students
15 on average is higher than the performance of the
16 other large city school districts in New York
17 State--

18 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: The big five,
19 Buffalo, Syracuse, Rochester--

20 IRA SCHWARTZ: The, the big, the
21 big five, yes.

22 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: --and
23 Yonkers?

24 IRA SCHWARTZ: It is, yes, it is
25 about, it is also, I believe above the performance

1
2 of what are known as the high need urban/suburban
3 school districts in New York State, and I believe
4 New York in mathematics may now be exceeding or
5 close to the performance of rural school districts
6 in New York State. They are not yet up to the
7 performance of our low need school districts or
8 our average needs school districts.

9 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I turn to my
10 colleague Lew Fidler for a question, if you don't
11 mind. Council Member Fidler of Brooklyn.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Thank you,
13 Mr. Chairman. Mr. Schwartz.

14 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: You got to
15 speak a little louder.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Why does
17 this always happen to me. Okay. One SUNY grad to
18 another, I appreciate your having sat here through
19 all of this. And I'm sure you heard the, you
20 know, the, the fundamental concerns. I mean, most
21 of us, you know, question the emphasis on the
22 testing to begin with. But if we're wrong, and
23 testing is valid, you also heard two concerns
24 about things that would affect the efficacy of the
25 test: cheating and excessive test preparation.

1
2 So, I was wondering whether or not State
3 Department of Education was considering any
4 regulations that might be imposed regarding
5 monitoring cheating, and whether or not the State
6 would consider what the City apparently is
7 unwilling to consider, which is to specifically
8 cap the amount of time we can spend on test prep.

9 IRA SCHWARTZ: I've made probably
10 hundreds of presentations to educators throughout
11 New York State and I always tell them that if you,
12 if you want to get the best results for your
13 students, then you should not be doing a lot of
14 test preparation. What you should--test
15 familiarity is acceptable, but really there
16 shouldn't, you're not going to ultimately get to
17 the kinds of results that you want for your
18 students if all you are doing is lots of drill and
19 practice on sample tests. I mean, it would be
20 like somebody who is preparing to run a marathon
21 who did nothing but prepare for the marathon by
22 practicing marathons. It's not the best way to go
23 about doing it. So, we, this is a message that
24 the State Education Department and my colleagues
25 constantly send out to school districts.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: So, in
3 principal, we absolutely agree. Does the State
4 Education Department have the power to issue a
5 regulation that prohibits excessive test
6 preparation?

7 IRA SCHWARTZ: I, I don't know if
8 that would be within, it would be probably fairly
9 hard to, to define that, and I don't know that
10 whether we have the authority to make it into a
11 specific regulation. We can continue as we have
12 been doing, to tell our colleagues in the field
13 about the balance that should be struck between
14 test familiarity, test preparation and the
15 importance of having a good, strong instructional
16 program.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Well, I
18 would ask you to, to ask those that make policy at
19 the State Education Department to look into
20 whether you have that power, and if you don't have
21 that power, maybe you should ask the legislature
22 to grant it to you. Clearly, there is an
23 unwillingness to place that limitation here in the
24 City, by the City Department of Education. And I
25 can only imagine that for those school districts

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2 that have listened to what you just said, and have
3 agreed that that's correct and choose to play by
4 those rules, that there at a statistical
5 disadvantage as compared to those jurisdictions
6 that do not. And so, the uniformity of a standard
7 for just how much time, you know, goes into test
8 prep as opposed to familiarity, prejudices people
9 and skews the result of your test statewide when
10 comparing school district to school district.
11 Wouldn't you agree?

12

IRA SCHWARTZ: I would take it a
13 slightly different tack. I would say that there's
14 a law of diminishing returns with test
15 preparation, and that ultimately it comes to a
16 point when you're actually going to end up having
17 worse results if there is an over emphasis on test
18 preparation to the exclusion of everything else.
19 And that the better results coming from having a
20 rich, full instructional program. And, and that
21 is what we have been urging school districts to
22 do.

23

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Either way,
24 excessive test prep is a bad thing.

25

IRA SCHWARTZ: We agree on that.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: So, so--
3 right, we agree on that. So, I'm asking you to go
4 back to your agency to see what you can do about
5 it, because clearly not every school district,
6 regardless of what their stated policy may be, is
7 implementing that. Because, you know, I mean,
8 Councilman Weprin is still here. I mean, it is
9 all of our experience. I mean, his kids are going
10 through it right now, my kids went through it over
11 the, over, you know, the past years, they're
12 recent, you know, graduates of New York City
13 schools. Every parent knows, every parent who's
14 paying attention knows, every teacher knows, and
15 every principal knows, that there's an excessive
16 amount of, of stress and test prep going on in the
17 City of New York. And clearly, since the
18 statistics matter so much to the gentlemen who
19 were sitting in this table before you, they're not
20 going to stop. So, someone's got to stop them,
21 sir, and I'm asking you to take that to your
22 superiors in Albany, and maybe they can do it for
23 us.

24 IRA SCHWARTZ: I will do that.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Thank you.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Mr. Fidler,
3 actually I want to jump in on what you just said.

4 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: You're like
5 chomping at the bit, ready to jump.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: That's
7 right, it just, just drives me cra--I mean, Mr.
8 Schwartz, you're right, the test prep is not good
9 for the long term health of education, but what it
10 is good at is short term getting right answers on
11 tests. And a good example of that is, you know,
12 I'm, I probably wouldn't be an attorney today if
13 it wasn't for, for a test prep company. I really
14 wouldn't, I took, you know, for the bar exam, you
15 go to Barbery [phonetic] or you do Peeper
16 [phonetic], there were different type of people,
17 and they teach you how to get the right answer on
18 that test. They'd teach, they taught you how that
19 question's going to be asked and how the answer,
20 it can be found without even knowing any of the
21 information. It was great. And it worked. And
22 that was, that is what they're doing to our
23 students now. I had, I had a third grader, he's
24 grown older now, but he got, he got a Stanley
25 Kaplan packet home, and one of the, one of the

1
2 advice they gave the eighth grader was, "If the
3 answer choice says always or never, it's the wrong
4 answer." Now does that help my child long term
5 into being ready for college, as the Department of
6 Education was saying? No, it just helps him get
7 the right answer on the test, 'cause probably
8 right, if the answer choice says, "It's always
9 this or--it's probably wrong." But that doesn't
10 help long term. But it does help short term. And
11 unfortunately most of the test prep that I see
12 going on is being done for that purpose, not to
13 bring our students up long term, but just to make
14 sure they get the highest grade possible on those
15 tests. So someone can say, "Look how much better
16 our schools are."

17 IRA SCHWARTZ: I think we, we
18 agree. And one of the things that the State
19 Education Department is working on is improving
20 the nature of the tests. So there's shouldn't be
21 tests where somebody can simply give you a little
22 technique that is independent of any skills or
23 knowledge that you're attempting to assess. And
24 by using that technique, you can get the correct
25 answer. That is why we're trying to move over

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2 time, we're part of the consortium of 26 states,
3 that's seeking to move to the next generation of
4 assessments, move away from dependence and over
5 dependence on multiple choice questions, over time
6 moving to assessments that are much more real
7 world skills and that are ones where if students
8 are being prepared for them, they are being
9 prepared exactly for the skills that we want
10 students to have.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Well, hear,
12 hear, I have to say, and this, the final point
13 about my, my Barb--my Barbery experience, is that
14 as great as they were at teaching me the right
15 answer on that test, I wouldn't want it, I
16 wouldn't want them to be the professor I had to
17 teach me tortes or constitutional law or anything
18 else, 'cause that's not what they were good at.
19 And unfortunately, and I see the head of the
20 Teacher's Union sitting here, we're going to lose
21 a generation of teachers who are out there
22 learning how to be Barbery instructors and not
23 professors.

24 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Mr. Schwartz,
25 you were here when I asked the Deputy Chancellor

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2 whether or not he thought there was too much test
3 prep going on. And he, he answered based on the
4 answers that he gave earlier, which was a long
5 explanation and the bottom line I said, "Is there,
6 yes or no?" And he basically said, "No," if I'm
7 not mistaken. I ask you, you, you were asked that
8 question and basically I'm hearing you're saying
9 that "Yes, there's too much test preparation going
10 on." Am I right or wrong in your basic response
11 in response to my colleague's questions? And I'm
12 not talking about New York City, I'm talking about
13 overall.

14 IRA SCHWARTZ: I think in terms of
15 my definition of test preparation, I would say
16 that in many parts of the State, there is more
17 than I would desire going on, yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Appropriate
19 answer. And now more specifically, you're around
20 the State of New York even though your, your
21 office is downstate. Where does New York City
22 stand with respects to test prepping compared to
23 everyone else? Is it like number one in the City,
24 in the State of New York as far as test
25 preparation time or what?

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2 IRA SCHWARTZ: No, I, I really
3 couldn't answer that question, it wasn't, you
4 know, one of the things that I was looking at when
5 I was observing things throughout the State.

6 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Understand.
7 Is it possible I can get that response from the
8 State Education Department?

9 IRA SCHWARTZ: We can try, I don't
10 know whether we would really have the, you know,
11 empirical data to be able to make that kind of
12 judgment.

13 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay, we'll
14 follow up on that. Now, let me ask, I have two
15 final questions and we'll move on. In the State
16 Education Department's data PowerPoint. Why do
17 you compare scores for the big five cities against
18 the total State scores rather than the rest of the
19 State, excluding the big five? So we can get a
20 assessment, as far as the rest of the State.

21 IRA SCHWARTZ: Well, typically,
22 the, the big five is considered to be, you know,
23 peers to each other, and the, the districts that--

24 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Is it because
25 they're mainly black and Latino?

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2 IRA SCHWARTZ: They are mainly
3 large urban--

4 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Poor?

5 IRA SCHWARTZ: --school systems
6 that have large numbers of students with low
7 income and other similar challenges.

8 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: You're a
9 diplomat, you know that, Mr. Schwartz? [laughter]
10 So, finally, my understanding is SED has not
11 willingly, willingly or refused to release the
12 full analysis by Daniel Koretz, the lead
13 researcher of the study by Harvard University
14 experts. Is that true or not true?

15 IRA SCHWARTZ: Unfortunately, I
16 don't know the status of the Daniel Koretz review,
17 and whether it's, has been or will be made public,
18 so I simply can't answer that question for you.
19 I'm sorry. I'm not, it's not an issue I've been
20 following.

21 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Well, let me
22 thank you for sitting and I hope that sitting and
23 listening to our colleagues and ask questions and
24 the responses has helped you more so in carrying
25 out your duties and responsibilities as the

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2 Assistant Commissioner for Education at the State
3 Education Department.

4 IRA SCHWARTZ: Indeed it has, thank
5 you. Thank you very much for the opportunity.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: - - You
7 taking the train back to Albany now?

8 IRA SCHWARTZ: No, I'm going to
9 Brooklyn. [laughs]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Okay, good,
11 you're down here, oaky.

12 IRA SCHWARTZ: Thank you.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: You
14 would've missed it. [laughs]

15 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay, next
16 we're going to hear from our Borough President, of
17 the Borough of the--Yes. Okay. He, then we're
18 going to call the President of the United
19 Federation of Teachers, Michael Mulgrew.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: And a
21 candidate for Borough President. - - huh?

22 MICHAEL MULGREW: [off mic] No.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: You want to
24 announce something here today, Mr. Mulgrew?

25 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: [laughs]

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2 MICHAEL MULGREW: I'm not going
3 into politics.

4 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Wouldn't have
5 a chance against that guy, anyway.

6 MICHAEL MULGREW: No. First I'd
7 like to thank the Borough President for deferring,
8 I appreciate that. And thank you, Chairman
9 Jackson and all the Members who are here today.
10 I'm not going to read my testimony, you're going
11 to hear about all these numbers from all different
12 people who have already testified and people who
13 are going to testify. It's, it's very sad that
14 we've gotten to this point. And when I hear, you
15 know, for two years now, we've been saying we have
16 a problem here in New York City. We are doing too
17 much teaching to the test. The NAEP scores are
18 clear that our, our achievement is not moving
19 forward. And the City would try to, the
20 Department of Education would try to refute what
21 the NAEP scores were saying. Now they're trying
22 to use the NAEP scores to defend themselves. So,
23 it's almost as if we're in a surrealistic
24 situation. But what's really bothering the
25 teachers and all of the people who are working in

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2 the schools, it's not so much, "What do these
3 tests mean?" it's that how much attention is being
4 focused upon the tests? We understand the
5 public's need for accountability. And we accept
6 that with open arms. But we also know that when
7 the education experts, when people who design
8 tests are telling us you should not be using them
9 to the degree in which you are in New York City
10 for making decisions, that to us is what the real
11 problem is. You talk about test prep here. Yes,
12 it is going on throughout the City. We call it
13 drill and kill. And yes, it is not teaching new
14 teachers what they need to know about pedagogical
15 skills that really will enhance students'
16 learning. We also have test prep that is going on
17 throughout, I hear, teachers now are not getting
18 curriculum, teachers are being given standards and
19 then are being given skill sets that a child needs
20 to understand, that will allow them to succeed on
21 a standardized test. This is why we started
22 seeing the gap growing between the State test
23 scores and the NAEP scores, because the NAEP does
24 a much thorough measurement of real learning
25 compared to what the State test scores were doing.

1
2 And I give Commissioner Steiner and Chancellor
3 Tisch all the credit in the world for bringing in
4 Dr. Koretz, and having him do an audit and analyze
5 the test. And one thing that was clear, he said,
6 "The tests, as they are currently structured in
7 New York State, are invalid to be used for any
8 high stakes decisions." And that is not out there
9 in public being discussed. Now, we are in a
10 process of changing the structure of the test,
11 that's going to take a couple of years, so that
12 there are things that are included that will help
13 in terms of problem solving, critical thinking,
14 things that you do not now have being measured
15 inside of our standardized tests. But this
16 continued focus, and the Department of Ed's
17 unrelenting belief that what they are doing, by
18 measuring schools and students almost solely on
19 standardized test scores, is the real problem with
20 the tests. So, you now have schools that are
21 going to be measured in a progress report. 85
22 percent of that progress report is based upon the
23 student's performance in the school on
24 standardized tests. The very test that Dr. Koretz
25 from Harvard said are invalid for this very use.

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2 Yet we are continuing this practice. We're going
3 to continue this practice even though everyone we-
4 -in this analysis, it says, "We need a different
5 type of test"--we're going to continue down this
6 road. So last year, when on the progress reports,
7 when 92 percent of the schools received and A or a
8 B, 87 percent A, everything was great. We didn't
9 believe it. We were public and said, "There's
10 something wrong, you're doing it too much on
11 standardized tests." And now this year they have
12 to change their progress reports, only for this
13 year, because they realize because of what
14 happened in the tests when they moved the cut
15 score, is that all of the schools would now
16 receive D and F. This is a game. We're not
17 supposed to be playing a game with our children's
18 education. And that's what the problem is. Now,
19 we agree that a student's performance on a test
20 score is a valuable piece of information, and is
21 something that we should look at when we're
22 evaluating schools and teachers. But we also
23 agree it has to be one component of a multiple
24 measurement system. What we're saying now is,
25 that a child who does a science project, a book

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2 report, that that is no longer part of their
3 learning, because we're not measuring it. And we
4 have to get back to that, because that is what
5 will make a difference. So this is the struggle
6 that we have as we move forward. Are we going to
7 continue with a fail educational policy? That is
8 going to push children into test prep factories.
9 Or are we going to go out of our way to do the
10 right thing, to come up with a holistic education
11 strategy, that will really help children learn?
12 So for the last two years, thousands of parents
13 were told that their child did great and was being
14 promoted. And then this summer, thousands of
15 parents were told that your child is now being
16 left back. Many more than ever before. Now to
17 those parents, I have nothing but sympathy. But
18 at the same time, I as a teacher, I always look
19 back on the two years before where all the
20 children were being promoted. We had, we got rid
21 of social promotion, but we were promoting almost
22 all the children. And those children now are
23 grades ahead and very far behind, because we were
24 using a standardized test to judge them. And that
25 is really the crime here. Because there were

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2 children who should've been receiving more
3 services, who should've had academic intervention,
4 who should've been going to summer school. And
5 they weren't allowed to do that because they were
6 passing tests that were not up to the rigor they
7 were supposed to be. And then people will say,
8 "We just have to make the test harder." It's not
9 that simple. That's why the experts are telling
10 us, "Do not use it for the sole purpose of making
11 these decisions." It has to be multiple measures.
12 So when a teacher enters a classroom, they're not
13 given a set of skills to teach a child so that
14 they're successful on a standardized test.
15 They're given a real curriculum that it will allow
16 them to teach real learning to a child. The
17 speaker before me, from, Mr. Schwartz, he was
18 correct. Children will learn, when you teach them
19 a real curriculum, the tests will take care of
20 themselves. And children who don't do well fine,
21 we will design support and strategy to get them
22 there. But what we're doing now is just playing a
23 game with the children of this City and State and
24 it's just wrong. Thank you very much.

25 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Well, let me

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2 thank you on behalf of the people you represent,
3 but also giving us your perspective with respect
4 to the 2010 test scores and, as you call, "drill
5 to kill" teaching to the test. Now, you heard Mr.
6 Schwartz talked about in his opinion, and these,
7 I'm paraphrasing him, that he feels there's too
8 much teaching to the test, test preparation
9 statewide.

10 MICHAEL MULGREW: Mm-hmm.

11 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I don't, you
12 were not here when the Deputy Chancellor said
13 that, I asked him a very direct question, was
14 there too much test preparation going on? And his
15 response was, an answer, no he didn't think it
16 was. And so, as the President of UFT, I heard you
17 saying there's too much test prep going on in our,
18 in our system. Is that correct?

19 MICHAEL MULGREW: From my opinion,
20 yes. And I could, both of them were probably
21 telling you the truth, because you're talking
22 about an ideological difference here. You're
23 talking about a group of people at the Department
24 of Education who believe that a child's grade on a
25 standardized test score equates to real learning.

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2 So that is their ideological bent. But those of
3 us who are in education who are teachers, and all
4 the educational researchers will tell you, that a
5 child's performance on a standardized test score
6 is only a portion of real learning, and should be
7 looked at that way. So when you ask them from the
8 Department of Education if there's too much test
9 prep, their answer should be no, because to them
10 test prep equals good test score equals real
11 learning. It's an ideological difference that
12 we're always going to have. We think we owe a
13 child a lot more than the ability to perform well
14 on a standardized test in their education, which
15 is why you hear so many things about college and
16 career ready, which is a major issue we're dealing
17 with. And I'm very concerned when the graduation
18 rates come out soon, and will be in next month, I
19 believe, when they now have to start showing the
20 numbers on college ready students. And I, it's,
21 and I'm very, very concerned what those numbers
22 are going to say.

23 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I asked the
24 question of the Deputy Chancellor, and I don't
25 know if you were here, based on the higher

1 standards that are being placed, based on the
2 higher grades that students have to achieve on the
3 Regents, the five Regents exams.
4

5 MICHAEL MULGREW: Mm-hmm.

6 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: And based on
7 the funding levels that have been cut at the
8 Department of Education and the State Education
9 Department, I asked whether or not, in his opinion
10 as the Deputy Chancellor, whether or not the
11 graduation rates in his opinion are going to
12 increase or decrease. And I ask you that same
13 question. Realistically, no nonsense.

14 MICHAEL MULGREW: Realistically at
15 this point, I have a concern that they will
16 decrease but there has been an emphasis on a thing
17 called "credit recovery."

18 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Well, you and
19 I know and I'll leave it to my colleague Lew
20 Fidler, credit recovery is a joke. Credit
21 recovery is a, is a scam, that basically is
22 robbing our children, in my opinion, especially
23 when you read in the paper where in order to get
24 credit recovery for a course, kids are basically
25 the ushers at a basketball game. That's not

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2 credit recovery. So Lew Fidler, please help me
3 out here. 'Cause I know that Lew would jump on
4 anybody on this subject.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Well,
6 [laughs] I, you know, I think we can all agree
7 that doing a diorama of the Battle of the Bulge
8 doesn't mean that you know United States history.
9 So, and I'm not, you know, we did hear [laughter]
10 we did hear from Mr. Schwartz that--oh, no, sorry,
11 from Mr. Thomases, I believe--that there's a new
12 protocol for, you know, for credit recovery,
13 that's supposed to standardize and collect data.
14 So I guess we'll see in a year whether or not
15 they're doing it as much as I think so. So, in
16 your opinion, and from the respective teachers,
17 how much credit recovery is going on here? And
18 how much is it affecting graduation?

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MICHAEL MULGREW: It's, there's a
20 lot more going on than ever before. You could
21 make up your credit, if you sat for the class you
22 did the seat time. And then you failed the class
23 at the end of the year. And then, you would have
24 to meet with a teacher at least once a week, and
25 come back every other week with a body of work

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2 that was assigned to you. And that would be
3 checked off through a plan that had to be
4 submitted every semester as a high school teacher.
5 And the agreed upon work, scope of work, would
6 have to be submitted to the Administration for
7 approval. So, it was a rigorous process. That is
8 no longer the process. And this has been a
9 subject of debate now for the past three years.
10 And it has gotten worse. But at least now at this
11 point they're going to have to report on it. It
12 is now something, how do I know it's out of
13 control? Because everywhere I go people are
14 talking about it. And before, years ago, we had
15 these programs, but it was small, and it was self,
16 and it was contained in a way, that a lot of
17 students would not engage in it because it was so
18 difficult. So, now that you, now the fact that
19 everywhere I go, people talk to me about credit
20 recovery, means that it's gotten way out of
21 control, and we've all heard the horror stories,
22 and about what they've been doing to just hand
23 credits to students.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: And are you
25 familiar with the new protocols? Or have teachers

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been told that this is going to happen?

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Principal's been told this is going to happen? Do

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you know?

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MICHAEL MULGREW: They have set--

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well, the devil is in the details, and in the

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compliance, as I, I like to say. And compliance

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is always something that we have a difficult with

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the Department of Ed.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: And if I

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could, Mr.--

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MICHAEL MULGREW: He went to pass

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his soup.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: So

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[laughter] in that case--

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MICHAEL MULGREW: Was that too

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graphic?

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MALE VOICE: Yes.

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MICHAEL MULGREW: Sorry.

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MALE VOICE: Strike that from the

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record.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: I just, you

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know, my, my younger son is now preparing to take

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the LSAT course.

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MICHAEL MULGREW: Congratulations.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Thank you.

We are now paying for an expensive tutoring class for him, on the presumption that's going to assist him, and I say very proudly that my son is attending an ivy league school, he's been four semesters dean list. And he's still taking this class. And obviously we're doing it because we believe, and he believes, that test prep is going to increase his score. He's getting his education at the University of Pennsylvania. He's getting his test prep at a test prep class. And that is a distinction I think our friends at the Department of Education are losing. And I would, I would also say that the real problem here, beyond test prep, is the reliance on statistics as the Holy Grail.

MICHAEL MULGREW: Mm-hmm.

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: And they, you know, yes, they, you know, statistics measure some things, but not everything. They've taken the human element out of this, I think they've taken creativity away from teachers, as well. And I would just say that when, when you make statistics the Holy Grail, and put people's

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2 livelihoods and existence, and ability to continue
3 to work, dependent upon the test results of
4 others, not only are you putting an undue stress
5 on them, but you're, you're asking for trouble.
6 [laughter] And I'm sure our colleagues at the New
7 York Police Department are probably dealing with
8 that same dynamic right now. All right? You
9 know, we've heard a lot about it. So, I honestly,
10 you know, I disagree ideologically with the
11 Department of Education. I know you do, too, I
12 agree with you completely in that respect. I
13 would just add one other fact, another way that
14 they're using test scores. I joined with you and
15 a number of my colleagues in suing the Department
16 of Education--

17 MICHAEL MULGREW: Mm-hmm.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: --on how,
19 which they closed schools. And I actually had a
20 relatively interesting meeting a couple of days
21 ago, with a team from the DOE, to talk to me about
22 the change in process for closing schools, 'cause
23 they probably just came out with a new set of
24 proposed regs. Well, closing schools depends on
25 the test scores. You get three Ds in a row on the

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2 progress report cards, or 85 percent statistical,
3 they're going to, they're, you know, you're going
4 to, you know, they're going to close you.

5

MICHAEL MULGREW: Mm-hmm.

6

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Well,
7 that's, that's about as draconian a decision as
8 one could make for an educational institution.
9 Life and death. All right? And they're using the
10 flawed test scores for it. And I think we have a
11 major philosophical difference, I think most of
12 the Members of this Committee have expressed that,
13 and you know, clearly something's got to give
14 here, and I, I'm not optimistic that under this
15 Chancellor, under this one man system, that we're
16 ever going to change that here. And that's why
17 I'm glad Mr. Schwartz is still sitting here in the
18 hopes that the powers that be in Albany will do it
19 for us.

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MICHAEL MULGREW: And the Mayor
said, was once quoted as saying, "In God we trust,
everybody else bring data." My response is, if
you're looking at the wrong data, then we have to
pray to God for the children.

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Right.

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2 MICHAEL MULGREW: And that's the
3 problem.

4 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Mr. Mulgrew,
5 let me thank you for coming in representing all o
6 the people that you represent at the United
7 Federation of Teachers, and we look forward to
8 working with you in order to try to ensure our
9 children the best quality education that they can
10 receive.

11 MICHAEL MULGREW: Thank you very
12 much, Chairman Jackson.

13 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.

14 MALE VOICE: Thank you, Mr. - -

15 [applause]

16 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Next, we're
17 going to hear from the Borough President of The
18 Bronx, Ruben Diaz, Jr. Good afternoon, Borough
19 President Diaz, Jr.

20 RUBEN DIAZ, JR.: Good afternoon,
21 Mr. Chair.

22 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Good to see
23 you as always, I hope your family is well.

24 RUBEN DIAZ, JR.: My family's well,
25 thank you. And I just wanted to say hello to you

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2 and, and the Members here. I know that the
3 Council Member was just talking about how proud he
4 is of his son; I'm proud to say that Little Ruben
5 is in Boston College, as well, and I saw him
6 yesterday, so I'm reenergized now.

7 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: [laughs]

8 RUBEN DIAZ, JR.: I got a chance to
9 see my son for the first time in a month. I just
10 want to say this, then, I'm going to read my
11 testimony, but before I get into it, I want to say
12 that while much has been said today on
13 standardized testing, I've been speaking about
14 standardized testing for a very long time, as a
15 member of the New York State Assembly, as a member
16 of its, for over twelve years, as a member of its
17 Education Committee. I've always said that one
18 size does not fit all. There are members of this
19 audience, namely a good friend of mine, Don
20 Friedman, who is here. He can attest to that.
21 However, I'm not the Assemblyman anymore, Mr.
22 Chairman, I'm the Borough President of a Borough
23 of 1.4 million Bronxites, the wonderful Borough of
24 The Bronx, which I call God's Country, and I just
25 wanted to commend you and the Members of this

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2 Committee, for holding this very important hearing
3 today to discuss the past year's shocking results
4 on the New York State Reading and Math Tests. So
5 I do want to speak about tests today. I'm hopeful
6 that this will be the beginning of a process that
7 gets to the truth, as you said earlier, on what
8 caused the drop in, in scores and also examines
9 what has happened in both the State and City level
10 over the past several years. Last year, Mr.
11 Chairman, in math, 82 percent of third through
12 eighth grade students in New York City were deemed
13 proficient. 82 percent. However, this year that
14 number has fallen by 28 points to an alarming 54
15 percent. Reading scores also suffered the same
16 dramatic drop, as last year's 69 percent
17 proficiency rate fell by 27 points, to just 42
18 percent this year. Recently, the State Education
19 Department has requested that the New York City
20 Department of Education, the DOE, develop a
21 corrective, a corrective action plan for our
22 English language learners, other known as ELLs.
23 The Bronx numbers for ELL students on both the
24 State math and ELA test, the reading test, are at
25 crisis proportions. 41.1 percent of Bronx ELL

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students score a Level I.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: 44.1.

RUBEN DIAZ, JR.: 44.1. 44.9

percent are at Level II; 10.2 percent at Level III; and only .8, Mr. Chairman, at the highest level of proficiency, Level IV. In math, 26.8 percent of Bronx ELL students were at Level I; 49.3 percent at Level II; 19.7 percent at Level III; and just 4.2 percent at Level IV. The general response has been given by, that has been given by both the New York City Department of Education and the State Department of Ed, is that students are still doing as well as they did last year, but that the measurements used by the State have become more rigorous. However, education experts that I speak to, and you, if you listen to them, and I know you have, have questioned whether we have just reverted back to the standards that were lower over the past several years. These experts feel that there have been a deliberate reduction in scoring which lea--which has led to astronomical gains in both reading and math in recent years. Plain and simple, Mr. Chair, in the short answer portion of the test, the raw scores

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2 were lowered. In some cases dramatically. And we
3 need to understand why and how this has happened.
4 If you would turn your attention to the last sheet
5 on the package on my testimony, I just want you to
6 see something, there is a table. I don't know if
7 many of you had a chance to see this, not many
8 people have this, this information. But I've
9 included this, and this is--this sheet contains
10 the entire grade three through eight ELA cut score
11 and raw score comparisons from 2006 and 2009. On
12 this sheet you will see dramatic drops in raw
13 scores, where in some cases the score is almost
14 cut in half. For instance, turn your attention to
15 2006 grade five, the, the scores on the top are
16 the ELA. You see the grade five Level II raw
17 score was a twelve. Did you see that 2006 raw
18 score, grade five, Level II was a twelve. So, you
19 needed to get, in order for you to be a Level II
20 in 2006, you needed twelve correct responses, in
21 the ELA, the short answer portion of the exam. If
22 you look across to 2009, that was lowered and
23 dropped to nine, from twelve to nine. In, in
24 2006, if you look, math are the scores at the
25 bottom, grade three, Level II. So grade three,

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2 Level II, you see the raw score in 2006, was 17.
3 In 2009, that number was dropped, if you look
4 across to eleven. Now, when you look at this, it
5 raises a lot of questions, I know that I have a
6 lot of questions regarding this issue, and I urge
7 this Committee to pursue those questions. For
8 instance, why did former State Department of
9 Education Commissioner Mills lower these cut
10 scores? Did the Board of Regents, who are his
11 boss, or who were his boss, approve of this
12 decision? It has been stated to me and my staff,
13 and I have the, my Director of Education, Jessie
14 Mohican with me here today, that the New York City
15 Department of Education was aware of these
16 reductions as early as 2008. If so, Mr. Chairman,
17 then why did they continue to promote these
18 tremendous gains in terms of our test scores, when
19 they knew that the State had in essence lowered
20 the bar in New York City, in New York City? Well,
21 in New York City, schools, based on these results,
22 have closed, have been closed, bonuses have been
23 awarded, and students have received or not
24 received additional help as a direct consequence
25 to these tests. The results of these tests raise

1
2 one core question: What is truly the state of our
3 education system? And this is amazing because why
4 isn't the Commissioner of the State Education
5 Department here testifying? Why isn't the former
6 Commissioner of State Ed not here? Where is the
7 Chancellor? We have a, a political race for
8 Governor and everyone wants to talk about the
9 different personalities of the candidates. Why
10 are we focusing on the issues of education
11 statewide? Teachers, Mr. Chairman, and the
12 President of the Teachers Union was just here,
13 have been forced to teach to a test where many of
14 them felt that this test was invalid to begin
15 with. The Mayor is going around today with his
16 Education Nation, talking about how wonderful and
17 how much of a miracle in education he and the
18 Chancellor and the DOE have done here in the City
19 of New York. The whole nation is watching him
20 today. And yet, we see that these numbers are
21 telling a different story, and we see that in
22 areas of New York City, in many areas, still our
23 children are failing. And this is coming from
24 someone, as you know, Councilman Weprin, who voted
25 for Mayoral control when I was in the Assembly,

1
2 because I wanted accountability. And the Mayor
3 goes around today talking about, "Hold people
4 accountable, hold people accountable." Well, Mr.
5 Mayor, you should be held accountable, as well.
6 Many have argued that we should not play the blame
7 game or look into the past, but instead move
8 forward. I feel that this type of rhetoric is
9 hypocritical, especially when over the past eight
10 years we have had an education system that has
11 prided itself on accountability. And we have
12 based major reforms on this premise. We cannot
13 just have a selective few accountable and give
14 those in the positions of power the free pass.
15 This is unjust, and I, and I would ask this
16 Committee to not allow this to happen. I was also
17 happy to see that the State Senate Education
18 Chair, my good friend Suzi Oppenheimer, has agreed
19 to hold a hearing on this issue, as well. But I
20 believe, Mr. Chair, that the magnitude of these
21 findings require that hearings not only be held or
22 occurred in Manhattan, but throughout the State,
23 and we have written her a letter with this
24 request, and maybe this Committee can also join me
25 in those efforts and in that request. Chairman

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2 Jackson and the Members of the Committee, I would
3 also ask that you consider holding hearings
4 throughout the City so that in all of our
5 boroughs, every single parent, student, community
6 member and educator who wants will have the
7 opportunity to voice his or her concerns and get
8 to the truth of this situation so that we can
9 truly move forward. Members of this Committee,
10 with more students scoring at Level I and II than
11 reported in previous years, we also need to have a
12 detailed plan from the City's DOE as to when,
13 where and how these children who are failing will
14 be receiving the services needed to get to the
15 grade, to get at grade level and beyond. The
16 Borough of The Bronx, as well as all of the
17 residents of the entire State, deserve a full and
18 detailed response as to what has truly occurred
19 here. I am confident that this Committee will
20 aggressively examine these issues. I know you,
21 Mr. Chair, and all of your years of advocacy, I
22 know your heart, I know many of the members of, if
23 not all of the members who are here today, but the
24 members on, on this panel and this Committee, and
25 I know that you all want what's very, the very

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2 best for our children. So, I urge you and the
3 rest of the Members of this Committee, and the
4 entire New York City Council, in helping me call
5 on the former State Education Chair, Commissioner
6 Richard Mills, to testify at the State hearings
7 and in future hearings for this Committee, as well
8 as Board of Regents members, as well as our
9 Chancellor of the, of, of the City DOE, Joe Klein,
10 and the Deputy Mayor on Education. I thank you
11 for the opportunity to allow me to share my
12 thoughts, and I commend you for this hearing.
13 Thank you. [applause]

14 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Borough
15 President Ruben Diaz, Jr., let me thank you for
16 coming in and testifying on this extremely,
17 extremely important issue. And obviously you are
18 fully aware of how important this hearing is, and
19 examining the test scores of 2010, and the results
20 that it will have, the impact it will have on our
21 children. And you gave the statistics on ELL
22 students, but obviously you know that you can put
23 the statistics on all of the students of The Bronx
24 and I would hope that the statistics are not the
25 same, I would hope that they're better, but

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2 overall the statistics citywide are not good. And
3 in fact, we said that we're in an educational
4 crisis. And our colleague from Staten Island,
5 Vincent Ignizio asked why, why wasn't the
6 Chancellor at this hearing today? And the
7 response was that, you know, if we ask him to come
8 to hearings, or ask him, you know, then he may
9 come. But we said that he should not have to be
10 asked to come to this hearing. That, that he
11 should have been here knowing that this is an
12 extremely important issue for all of the children
13 in New York City. And I don't know if you were
14 here when I asked the question on whether or not
15 the waiver that was given by the State Education
16 Department to all of the local educational
17 districts, New York City being one, the right to,
18 if they so desire, to only require students that
19 have scored at level one, academic intervention
20 services. Whereas last year, it was all children
21 that scored a Level I and II were required to
22 receive academic intervention services. And now,
23 the State Education Department is basically
24 granting districts the waiver that they only have
25 to grant Level I. Now they can grant Level II or

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2 Level III, but consider--considering realistically
3 the budget situation, and I just think that's
4 appalling. I clearly believe that all children
5 that feel that they need academic intervention
6 services, or their parents, they should receive
7 it. Do you have an opinion about whether or not,
8 what is the need in your great borough, as far as
9 academic intervention services for the students
10 that you represent, knowing that, at least to my
11 knowledge, that the poorest congressional district
12 in the United States of America is in the South
13 Bronx. And knowing based on the need there, I
14 would think that we should be providing academic
15 intervention services to all parents, their
16 students, who need it or who request it.

17 RUBEN DIAZ, JR.: Well, that's a
18 good question, and there are a number of things
19 that we can do in The Bronx. Obviously, when you
20 look at ELLs, and you, there are too many schools
21 who should have classes and, and instruction for
22 our ELL students, who are in one way, shape or
23 form, figuring out how not to have 'em in their
24 school buildings. And this is something that we
25 have to look into. There're, there're a number f

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2 ways that this is happening. When you look at our
3 ninth graders, who are, they're in, after the
4 first semester in high school, failing one or two
5 courses, statistics show that in your first
6 semester in high school, as a ninth grader, if you
7 fail, particularly our black and Latino men, when
8 you fail more than, than two courses, there's a
9 likelihood that you're not going to wind up
10 finishing your high school career, that you will
11 drop out. And yet there aren't resources so that
12 principals and educators could intervene at that
13 level. We should have parent academies. Many of
14 our parents, when they say there's, there's no
15 parental involvement, the reason why there is not
16 parental involvement is because we see parents
17 that a) either feel like they're not being
18 listened to, but the overwhelming majority of
19 parents don't know how to disseminate and
20 decipher. It's difficult for some of us who are
21 in elective office, who have staff, who have
22 experts around us, to look at formulas, funding
23 formulas and, and grading formulas and try to
24 disseminate that. Many of our parents don't know
25 how to do that and so we have to give them that

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2 mechanism. But for me, before we get to any of
3 that, Mr. Chairman, we have to look how is it that
4 we get the City DOE and the State DOE to admit
5 that there's a problem? And you, you can't get
6 some, you know, a somebody who's a substance abuse
7 abuser to get healthy, unless they're willing to
8 say that there's a problem. Here we clearly have
9 a problem, and we should not allow for New York
10 City to, to point the finger at the State, for the
11 State to point at DOE. Collectively, they need
12 to, I think that they've been in cahoots with each
13 other. Collectively, we have to see that there's
14 been a watering down of our test scores, that the
15 tests have not gotten harder, that is a farce.
16 What happened is that we just went back to
17 standards that should've been there to begin with,
18 and the City knew about it when the State did it,
19 and the City decided to still pound themselves in
20 the chest and say, "Look at what a great job that
21 we're doing." We have had a problem with the way
22 that our tests are being, are graded. We, our
23 kids are being lied to. And before we go into
24 what is it that we have to ha--what is it we have
25 to do, in any particular borough or school

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2 district or school building, we have to come to,
3 to a place where we have the powers that be. The
4 Chancellor not being here today, that is wrong.
5 The fact that the Mayor, who wanted Mayoral
6 control, is not here today, that is wrong. That's
7 why we gave him Mayoral control. The fact that we
8 have the former Chair, Commissioner of the State
9 Department, who is not at these meetings, who has
10 not been called, who is not going to be called to
11 the State hearings, that is wrong. Somebody,
12 somebody dropped the ball here. Somebody knew
13 that it was wrong to drop the, the standard of
14 the, of the tests, and yet everyone turned the
15 blind eye. I think that the Mayor has been
16 allowed and been let off the hook, he's been off,
17 let off the hook by the media. If this was
18 happening in corporate America, and this type of
19 shenanigans would've went down, somebody would've
20 been fired, somebody would've been held
21 accountable. And yet, this right here is such a
22 big issue, and it's so, and it's so blatant, and
23 it's just amazing how the, the Commissioner, the
24 former Commissioner's not even held responsible to
25 this. It's amazing how we know that the City DOE

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2 knew that these scores were watered down. And
3 yet, they go out there and say, "What a wonderful
4 job they're doing." What's even scarier, Mr.
5 Chairman, is that there are other municipalities
6 in the United States who are looking at Mayor
7 Bloomberg and what's happening the City of New
8 York, and they want to create the same type of
9 model, they look at it as a paradigm for their
10 educational system. And they better watch out.
11 And, and today, he's on TV once again, and yet he
12 has not been held accountable. So before, I mean,
13 I could give you a number of different ways that
14 we can better the education system in The Bronx
15 and the City of New York, but first we have to
16 shape things up at DOE and the State Department of
17 Education before we get to that.

18 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Well, let me
19 turn to our colleague, former State Assembly
20 Member, now a City Council Member, your former
21 colleague, Mark Weprin.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Thank you,
23 Mr. Chair.

24 RUBEN DIAZ, JR.: Who I think is a
25 wonderful attorney, by the way.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Aw, thank
3 you, you need counsel? [laughter] It's very good
4 to see you, Mr. Borough President, nice to see you
5 again. And I, I really do appreciate your
6 testimony. It's so frustrating for us, and as a
7 parent, and you as a parent, these last eight
8 years have drive me crazy because so much of
9 everything that has gone on in the school has been
10 based on these test scores. And as you pointed
11 out, it's all been a farce.

12 RUBEN DIAZ, JR.: Right.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Really it's
14 all been a farce. It's all been smoke and mirrors
15 in order to try to make people look good. And I
16 believe the, the problem is, is that we're using
17 these tests not to evaluate children, students, as
18 much as we're using them to evaluate everybody
19 else: teachers, you know, principals,
20 chancellors, commissioners and mayors. And that's
21 not what the tests are supposed to be designed
22 for, that's what Michael Mulgrew said. Those
23 tests are not designed to evaluate those factors.
24 And there are so many other ways we could hold
25 teachers accountable, by having, watching them

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2 teach, god forbid we do that. Watching them
3 teach, do evaluations of questionnaires, of
4 experts coming in and watching them teach, while
5 looking at the class work and what work is being
6 done. And hold them accountable. We're all for
7 accountability, don't get me wrong. Bad teachers
8 I'd like to see move on. But this is not the way
9 to judge them. So, what I'd like to ask you to
10 do, Mr. Borough President, being one of the most
11 dynamic leaders I think we have in the City of New
12 York.

13 RUBEN DIAZ, JR.: Thank you.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Someone who
15 I think has an amazing future here in this City,
16 you have the ability to spread this word better
17 than a small country Councilman like me, out from
18 Eastern Queens. [laughter] And I feel like Don
19 Quixote sometimes, 'cause I talk about his all the
20 time, and I want parents to know, they don't have
21 to take this. We don't have to have standardized
22 tests be the way everyone's going to judge your
23 kids. How about they start learning instead of
24 that? And in my school district, there's no
25 question over the last eight years that the

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2 schools have gotten worse. And I wish more people
3 would've said that. And there's no question in my
4 mind they have learned less in my schools now
5 because of the emphasis on standardized testing,
6 reason number one; because they stopped teaching
7 anything else beyond the standardized test. And
8 your, your testimony here today says it's the same
9 in The Bronx.

10 RUBEN DIAZ, JR.: Right.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: In what's
12 one of the most underachieving school districts.
13 So we're on the same page. So, I would like you
14 to continue to talk about this, 'cause people
15 listen to you.

16 RUBEN DIAZ, JR.: I certainly will
17 continue to talk about this. I have for a very
18 long time. And I think when you look at all of
19 the wonderful things that are happening in The
20 Bronx, everything that we're doing in terms of the
21 Green Economy and the infrastructure there, you
22 know, so many wonderful things that, stories that,
23 that we can go on and on about The Bronx. When
24 it's all, all said and done, in order for our
25 borough to have a solid, solid future, it's about

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2 having people want and feel like they want, they
3 want to stay there. And people make those
4 decisions based on the educational system. People
5 make those decisions based on how they feel their
6 children are going to learn. And so for me, this
7 is personal. For me, I want to see folks in The
8 Bronx stay there, raise their children, and then
9 when those children get a wonderful education, for
10 them to stay as well. So I'm going to continue,
11 whether it's in The Bronx, whether it's in your,
12 your borough of Queens, or Brooklyn, or Staten
13 Island, and today I'm in Manhattan. I'm going to
14 continue to speak loud and clear. And I'm going
15 to go up to Albany and let them know that there's
16 a problem, somebody needs to be held accountable,
17 people knew about this, and they're not going to,
18 and they should not get away with it.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Thank you.

20 RUBEN DIAZ, JR.: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: So, Mr.

22 Borough President, let me thank you for coming in.
23 I've concluded, based on what you've testified,
24 and we've said it earlier, that education,
25 education in New York City is in a crisis. Do you

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2 agree or disagree with that?

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RUBEN DIAZ, JR.: I agree with that
1,000 percent, sir.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you for
coming in, representing the great people of The
Bronx.

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RUBEN DIAZ, JR.: Thank you, thank
you, have a good day. [applause]

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: And next
we're going to hear from Erin McGill, a
representative of Manhattan Borough President
Scott Stringer. Is Erin here?

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ERIN MCGILL: Yes.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Hi, Erin.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Mr.

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Chairman, I, I want to apologize to my colleagues
and the rest of the panelists. I had a 5:00
o'clock appointment that I should've learned my
lesson, never make a 5:00 o'clock appointment on
the day of an Education Committee meeting, but I,
I do apologize to those who haven't testified yet,
and to those of you I'm leaving behind. So.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. Erin,

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welcome--

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ERIN MCGILL: Thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: --

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representing Borough President Scott Stringer.

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ERIN MCGILL: Thank you. I want to thank members of the SOS Coalition for letting me step in their place, to meet time constraints. Borough President hoped to be here and couldn't make it because of the, the delays in his schedule.

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MALE VOICE: Wednesday, yeah, you

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know, [laughter]

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ERIN MCGILL: I will be submitting testimony formally and just reading excerpts of the Borough President's testimony on his behalf. I would like to thank Chairman Jackson and Members of the Committee on Education for holding today's hearing on state test score results for 2010. For the last eight years, the DOE has made State test scores the cornerstone for gauging their educational accomplishments, and used them to determine everything from student promotions to school report card grades, school closings and teacher bonuses. We've watched students math and ELA scores rise rapidly and the DOE boast to City

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1 students and families of the immense measureable
2 progress they had made. This year, the New York
3 State Education Department raised the bar students
4 must meet on math and ELA exams to be deemed
5 proficient, after testing experts determined that
6 the exams were deeply flawed, and more than
7 100,000 students who believed they were on a path
8 to success, suddenly learned that they instead
9 were woefully unprepared. 82 percent passed math
10 last year, compared with 54 percent this year; and
11 last year, 69 percent passed reading, compared
12 with this year's 42 percent. Special education
13 students and English language learners saw their
14 proficiency levels drop from an already
15 distressing low of 35 percent to below 15, and the
16 achievement gap thought to have been closing
17 turned out to be as wide as it was eight years
18 before. These are difficult and extremely painful
19 realities to absorb, particularly for the students
20 and families who were assured that ever rising
21 test scores meant a new and promising future. The
22 DOE's response on the whole has been
23 underwhelming. DOE consistently reminds us that
24 New York City is still making progress, compared
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2 with the rest of the State, and that for years it
3 has called upon State Ed to raise standards. And
4 the DOE has stated repeatedly, "We know we are not
5 where we need to be," which begs the critical
6 question, still unanswered, "Then how are we going
7 to get where we need to be? And where and when
8 are we going to get there?" Accountability in
9 this Administration has remained fixed at the
10 school level alone. If a Wall Street firm issued
11 exaggerated reports and purported artificial
12 gains, misleading thousands of investors, State
13 and federal authorities would launch serious
14 investigations, as they have, and people
15 responsible would face severe punishment. We now
16 face the educational equivalent, except instead we
17 have, instead of lost funds, we're looking at
18 students lost potential, and the loss of their
19 future achievement and success. Now is the time
20 for solutions, not spin. Parents deserve action
21 from the DOE, including an effective,
22 comprehensive and clearly laid out plan for
23 struggling students and schools with high
24 concentrations of over-performing students,
25 support for struggling students by maintaining the

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2 requirement that students who score below Level
3 III be given academic intervention services for 37
4 minutes a week, the names of central DOE staff who
5 will be responsible for ensuring that students in
6 schools receive adequate support and necessary
7 remediation, and a clear explanation of how the
8 DOE will handle policy decisions based around
9 flawed testing, including around student
10 promotions, school report card grades, school
11 closings and financial bonuses for school staff.
12 The DOE should recognize its responsibility to
13 make meaningful changes and meet this challenge
14 head on. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: So Erin, you
16 basically summarized and/or read part of the
17 statement of our Borough President, Borough
18 President Scott Stringer. I ask you the same
19 question that I asked Borough President Ruben
20 Diaz, Jr. In your opinion, as the representatives
21 of Borough President Scott Stringer, are we in a
22 crisis with education in New York City? Knowing
23 all of the stuff that we know with respects to the
24 reconfiguration of the test scores and everything
25 else.

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2 ERIN MCGILL: I believe that that
3 would be an accurate statement, yes.

4 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Because, I
5 just need to know whether or not I'm out there on
6 our, we're out there on our own, or whether or not
7 the other people that represent, that are elected
8 by the people of New York City, the Borough
9 President of Manhattan, 1.8 million people; the
10 Borough President of The Bronx, 1.4 million, so
11 that's over 3.2 million people right there. That
12 we're in agreement that, that education is in a
13 crisis here in New York City. And if the other
14 Borough Presidents was here, I would ask them the
15 same thing. Because I get the impression that the
16 Department of Education doesn't believe that we're
17 in a crisis. Or, and they have said, I think,
18 that this didn't start just a couple years ago,
19 but it's been going on for decades. But I do know
20 that Mayor Bloomberg has been in office the same
21 period of time that I've been in office, and he
22 asked for Mayoral control, and he got it. And so,
23 quite frankly, I do think that the people of our
24 great City expect results. And the result that
25 we're getting is not what we expected. Am I right

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2 or wrong in that assessment?

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ERIN MCGILL: I think it's very concerning that, I think it's very concerning that people were led to believe that everything, that we were on the right track, and that kids were going to have a bright and promising future, and now it clearly looks like there is something different from that happening.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Well, let me thank you, I don't know whether or not you sat in through most of the hearing, you did, so you got to hear and see everything, which is good. And what capacity are you with the Borough President, if you don't mind?

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ERIN MCGILL: I became the Borough President's Education Policy Analyst last December.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. Well, then I'm glad that you were here, sitting through and heard every--all the testimony, questions and answers that would hopefully that help you focus a little bit more as his point person on education.

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ERIN MCGILL: Absolutely.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you

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2 very much.

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ERIN MCGILL: Thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.

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MALE VOICE: Thank you, Erin.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.

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For the record, we received testimony from the

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Advocates for Children. And for the record, we

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received testimony from David Bloomfield,

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Professor and Chair of the Education Department at

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the College of Staten Island, CUNY, and a former

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President of the Citywide Council on High Schools

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and elected parent body. And next we're going to

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hear from Jose Gonzales from CEJ, the Coalition

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for Educational Justice; and SOS, Save Our

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Schools; and from Micheline Edwards of SOS from

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the Grand Concourse in The Bronx; and Minerva

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Morales; and Evelyn Feliciano. Please come

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forward. And whoever wants to begin first, you

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may begin. Identify yourself, what position

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you're with, with the organization, and may begin

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your testimony.

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MICHELINE EDWARDS: Good afternoon,

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my name is Micheline Edwards [phonetic], and I'm

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here today with the Parent Action Committee, from

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2 The Bronx and CEJ, to support the demands to stop
3 the high stake policy decisions that are based on
4 test scores. My daughter Tyese [phonetic]
5 graduated from eighth grade in June. She was
6 really excited and looking forward to high school.
7 On her second day of high school, they kicked her
8 out saying that she was still registered in her
9 old middle school. She was devastated, and I was
10 furious. I called everyone, including the
11 principal, the superintendent, the Chancellor, the
12 Mayor, even the President. But nobody was helping
13 me. It breaks my heart to see my daughter out of
14 school for this long. Finally, I came across CEJ
15 in the news and I got some good advice from the
16 Parent Action Committee, at the new Settlement
17 Apartment in The Bronx. They helped me to get my
18 daughter in a great school. We spoke with the
19 superintendent, which in turn was able to obtain a
20 dispossession letter from the Executive Director
21 of The Bronx enrollment. The letter stated that
22 she had been promoted to the ninth grade. We were
23 ecstatic, only to receive a phone call later that
24 day from the principal telling me he was not
25 letting, not to let her in the school and that

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there'd been some type of misunderstanding. Misunderstanding, I beg to differ. There are thousands of students just like her stuck between two grades because of this messed up testing system. That's why I'm here today. I agree with the Save Our Schools demands, especially about suspending high stake policy decisions that are based on test scores, until there is a reliable system. Promotions should be based on many factors, not just test scores. Some know the material, just don't perform well on tests. In addition, holding children back just because of the test can deeply affect their morale and attitude towards school. Luckily, my child is dying to go to school. If she has to repeat the eighth grade, sit through the exact same classes, this didn't prepare her for the first time, how would that affect her? What she needs to be is in the ninth grade, where she belongs. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.

Is your daughter here?

MICHELINE EDWARDS: She's right here.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I made that

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2 assumption, but I didn't want to assume, I wanted
3 to ask. So, I'm going to listen to the other
4 people, but is she in the ninth grade now?

5 MICHELINE EDWARDS: No. They just
6 pulled her out of school on Friday, stating that
7 they made a mistake.

8 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: It's
9 incredible. Next, please.

10 JOSE GONZALEZ: Good afternoon,
11 everybody. My name is Jose Gonzalez, and I have
12 two children in PS 73 in High Bridge, located in
13 The Bronx, District Nine. And I am a former PTA
14 President of the school, I'm a Parent for United
15 Friends of High Bridge in New York City Coalition
16 for Educational Justice, CEJ. I'm very disappoint
17 in the low quality of education that my children
18 are receiving in edu--in New York City Public
19 School, not just because, not because my
20 principal, but because of the way that Mayor
21 Bloomberg and the Chancellor Klein are conducting
22 the public education. The New York test score are
23 a clear signal that the Department of Education
24 has failed to give a well-rounded education to our
25 children, and prepare them for colleges and

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2 career. I saw the test score of my two children,
3 and I was very shocked to see how their test score
4 went down in 2010. Also, one of my sons is one of
5 the 11,000 children who didn't pass the grade, and
6 have to, to repeat it, the, the third, third
7 grade. My child was in fourth grade last year,
8 and in 2009 he's performing level at in ELA was
9 close to Level II. But this year, he fell to
10 Level I. And in math his score fell from close to
11 Level IV down to Level II. My school is also on
12 the Joint - - Team, the - - team least, which is
13 mean that it is at risk to be, to be, or being
14 closed. My school is working hard, parent,
15 teachers and - - support together, to make a
16 better education for our children. But it
17 shouldn't be in our shoulder. We need more
18 support and more help from the Department of, of
19 Education to make it work. This is why the Save
20 Our School, or SOS, Coalition is actually asking
21 the Department of Education to ensure academic
22 support for all students at Level I and Level II,
23 like my son. Also, we want comprehensive support
24 for the most struggling school, like my school, PS
25 73, so we can have college preparatory curriculum,

1
2 the best teachers, social and emotional
3 counseling, and all the support. We also want DOE
4 to stop all policies based on test score, like
5 closing school and giving out school bonus until
6 we create a better accountability that is more
7 reliable and balanced. These test score are a
8 disaster, but the DOE seems to do not take
9 responsibility for it. They should account--they
10 should be accountable and open a serious
11 conversation about this topic, that is important
12 for the life of our children. And later for
13 ending this statement, Deputy Chancellor was
14 talking about the parent - - program, I will say
15 that most of the, of the parents in New York City,
16 they don't know what level their children are.
17 But also, but also I will say, I will say that we
18 need more support to the parents because most of,
19 most of the parent have the knowledge to go into
20 the computer and check what is the level of the
21 child. And that's why I call and I urge you, to
22 the Committee, Mr. Robert Jackson, Mr. Robert
23 Jackson, is that if we got, if we can get the
24 support for the Department of Education to send
25 not through the school but send the test score to

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2 each child in a public school education to the
3 house of each parent, because they know to be,
4 they know to know what the level of their child,
5 they are right now. And also, that will make, you
6 know, that, that also will let them know in which
7 way they can work together to, with the teachers
8 and, and in the school. Thank you. [clapping]

9 MINERVA MORALES: Good afternoon,
10 my name is Minerva Morales, and I'm the mother of
11 Carson Regis [phonetic], a sixth grader and
12 Montall [phonetic] Science Technology Academy.
13 Last year, Carson was a student in PS 306; in
14 2008, my son Level III in ELA and in mathematics
15 exams. In 2009, my son was so excited for the
16 hard work he paid off and his math score went, his
17 level went up to IV. This year, after the change
18 and all the test scores, Carson's scores went
19 down, both in English and Math exams. He, he went
20 down to Level II in English, and in math in Level
21 III. DO--I'm sorry. Children shouldn't be upset
22 if their scores went down. That they should be
23 more motivated to do better. Well, he was very
24 upset when he learned about his test scores.
25 Imagine thinking all is well and then finding out

1
2 that it isn't true. Parents and children all
3 around the City are in the position now. At least
4 those of us in organizations who knew to go to our
5 RIS [phonetic]. We keep hearing that the DOE is
6 not releasing scores to families. Maybe they
7 think if we don't know the truth, we won't be
8 upset. City Council must demand the parents
9 receive their children scores immediately. My son
10 and I are both really worried about his education.
11 He's been asking me how he will be able to know
12 that he's making progress in his school. He needs
13 to go to Level--he's already been a little worried
14 about moving, I'm sorry, into middle school from
15 elementary school and now he's extra stressed and
16 just not being sure what kind of education he's
17 getting in New York City public schools. As a
18 parent, I am trying really hard to get him an
19 extra service he needs. I'm trying to get him
20 afterschool programs, maybe get him some tutoring,
21 but I don't think I should have to do this alone.
22 The Department of Education should really be
23 taking this more seriously and helping students
24 like my son who's self-esteem has been affected by
25 this test scores. I am doing everything I can to

1
2 help my son, but we need the Department of
3 Education to help us, too. Thank you, I'm sorry,
4 I'm nervous.

5 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.
6 No, you did fine. Next, please.

7 EVELYN FELICIANO: Hello.

8 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Hi.

9 EVELYN FELICIANO: My name is
10 Evelyn Feliciano. I am a single parent and an
11 active parent leader with the Coalition of
12 Educational Justice. I am very disappointed with
13 the new test scores because my son John Feliciano
14 is not on track for success in life. I
15 immediately checked the ARIS site and was
16 horrified to discover that my son's grade level
17 had dropped to a Level I from a II regional Level
18 III. He attended The Bronx School of Science
19 Inquiry and Investigation, also known as MS 331.
20 He is now attending HSCA high school. But he's
21 with a low self-esteem. His school, the middle
22 school has dropped from having a 81 percent of
23 students on level in math to a 26 percent. He
24 hasn't received the support he desperately needed
25 in the school. He had no official special ed

1
2 teacher. He was placed with sixth, seventh and
3 eighth graders in one class. My son received test
4 scores home tutoring twice a week this year, and
5 passed with a 77 percent. My son said the State
6 test given was not based on anything that he's
7 learned. The number of special education students
8 citywide who met State standards for English
9 language arts went from a depressing 35 percent to
10 13 percent, which makes me very angry.

11 Accountability begins with Chancellor Klein. His
12 legacy has been built on inflated test scores
13 while our children were not learning. I am here
14 today to speak about changes, because the DOE
15 needs an emergency action plan to keep these kids,
16 like my son. Why do we need an emergency plan?

17 To make sure that the more, to make sure that the
18 more than 100,000 additional students who did not
19 meet State standards this year get tutoring and
20 other support services. To make sure that 50,000
21 additional students who like my son are in Level I
22 this year, get intensive support so they can get
23 on track to graduate high school and go to
24 college. To help the 369 schools like my school
25 where more than two-thirds of the students are

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2 below grade level. And 150 schools where more
3 than a quarter of students are at Level I. I am
4 part of the coalition of parents, education
5 advocates and elected officials called Save Our
6 Schools, SOS, that has proposed three important
7 actions. First, we need intensive services to
8 help all Level Is and Level II students. Two, the
9 DOE should suspend for one year all policies based
10 on these test scores until we can create a better
11 accountability system. Third, we need a
12 comprehensive support for the most struggling
13 schools so they can provide the rigorous
14 curriculum, excellent teaching and social and
15 emotional support that kids need. This is an
16 emergency, it is a crisis, and Chancellor Klein
17 acts like its business as usual. Like you see
18 he's not here. This is our plan. Chancellor
19 Klein, what is your plan?

20 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Well, let me
21 thank all of you parents for coming in and giving
22 testimony. And I, I don't know, did you sit
23 through the whole hearing? Did you have the
24 opportunity to hear all of the questions and
25 responses? Now, of all of the parents, can you

1
2 just come up to the table, I have a question to
3 ask all of you, I want you to answer. You heard
4 me ask the question about whether or not parents
5 are receiving their children's test scores, and
6 they said it was available on ARIS as of August
7 15th. So how many of you of the four parents that
8 are here, and obviously you are active parents,
9 because you're members of CEJ and members of SOS.
10 How many of you have gone online to see your
11 children's test scores as per what the Deputy
12 Chancellor indicated. Now the four of you that
13 testified, you're right in front of me, raise your
14 hand if you've gone on the computer to see your
15 child's test scores. So, three out of four of you
16 did. Okay? [background voice] Okay. Question
17 to you, okay, did you have help navigating that
18 DOE's website, or you knew how to navigate it?

19 MICHELINE EDWARDS: I knew how to
20 navigate it.

21 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: You do.
22 Okay. And how long have you been involved with
23 CEJ and SOS? In essence, before your involvement
24 in CEJ/SOS, did you know how to do that then?
25 Question. Okay, all three of you said yes. Okay.

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2 And how many of you out of the four of you have
3 computers at home, raise your hand. Okay, so all
4 four of you do. With internet access. Okay,
5 okay. You know, I'm trying to be real, trying to
6 assess the situation. Now, I, I do believe, based
7 on what I heard, that you believe that we're in an
8 educational crisis. Am I correct?

9 PANEL: Yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. And do
11 you believe that the Department of Education, you
12 heard me ask the question, based on the new
13 rigorous standards, based on the increase in
14 number of Regents Exams and the higher grade that
15 our children have to receive, based on all of
16 that, along with reductions in budget and what
17 have you, I ask the question, do you believe, I
18 asked that of the Deputy Chancellor, the
19 graduation rates are going to increase or
20 decrease? I think his response was--

21 PANEL: Increase, he said increase.
22 Increase slightly. [crosstalk] On track to
23 increase.

24 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Increase
25 slightly, if they're doing their job. I'm asking

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2 you what's your opinion based on everything you
3 know, based on the fact that from what all of you
4 said, not all of you, the reconfiguration have
5 thrown most of your children from either Level III
6 or IV down to Level II and I. Do you believe that
7 graduation rates are going to increase or decrease
8 in the future, based on what you know? You can
9 ask, ask, answer individually. So, just identify
10 yourself and respond. Go ahead.

11

EVELYN FELICIANO: My name is
12 Evelyn Feliciano. There's going to be more high
13 school dropouts. What's happening now with the
14 middle school, the high schools, going back to
15 middle school, that's making the kids want to not
16 learn, they don't want to keep on if this is the
17 way they have to, you know, live. Like this young
18 lady over here, it's not fair to her that she
19 already went to high school, and then she's back
20 down to middle school. So, I don't think she
21 wants to repeat the middle school, I think she
22 wants to probably, "Oh, well, I'm not, I don't
23 like school no more, so--" I kind of just,
24 decrease.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Jose

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Gonzalez.

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JOSE GONZALES: Well, in the way the, I think that, that in the way that the Department of Education is conducting all the system without being so truly without being so open to other, you know, to the parents and community, because if you see that some of the changes of regulations, you can see that, that in the - - the parents power is like, like, is not really huge, it's something like, you know. And, and if we, if we don't get to know more - - to the parent, more resources that they can help their children at home, and working together with, within the school, but having people in the school that have the accountability also, to give the resources that the parents need, I think that we're going to continue watching more dropout from, from, you know, this young, youngster. But also, we're going to, with this test score, we're going to see in the future that we're going to have more children in jail. That's what we'll, that's what we're watching. If we did, if we don't have the DOE Department, and the Chancellor and the Mayor accountability with this, this is a,

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2 this is a mess and this is a crisis. And I think
3 that in the way that the Deputy Chancellor that
4 was speaking is like as political, it's not as, as
5 a, as a Department of - - Institution, it's
6 something like protecting just, you know, the
7 center office. And I think we're going, we are in
8 the crisis, and, and as you are committee and
9 you're, I know very well, you, I mean, Mr.
10 Jackson, and, and all the committee, all the
11 Education Committee here, you, you're doing a
12 great job supporting the, not the, not just the
13 parent, but the realistic thing, in - - of, of
14 this mess.

15 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.

16 Minerva, do you have any comments?

17 MINERVA MORALES: Yes, I do. Can
18 you repeat yourself again, I'm sorry.

19 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I was asking
20 whether or not, based on the reconfiguration of
21 the scores, based on the higher Regents standards,
22 based on the overall reductions in funds and all
23 of the things that are happening, do you feel that
24 the graduation rates are going to increase or
25 decrease? The same question that I asked the

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2 Deputy Chancellor.

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MINERVA MORALES: Decrease,

definitely. If the school doesn't fix this crisis right now, it's not going to get any better. We need to fix this, so then we can see the kids graduating.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: And mother, I

forgot your name again, please. McLean?

MICHELINE EDWARDS: Micheline.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Micheline.

Come on, give me, what's your opinion.

MICHELE EDWARDS: I feel that it's

going to decrease, being that this is more like a epidemic, basically like a plague that's wiping through the City and states as well. I think that unless they find a remedy in terms of how to take care of the problem itself, then we're just going to plummet. The children are not going to want to learn, the kids are going to get very dissatisfied and not happy with school. I don't think that children, once again I'm stating over what I said before, I don't think that children should be based on their test scores. I think that it should be based on their overall performance in

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2 school.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: You mind if I ask a question of you daughter?

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MICHELINE EDWARDS: Sure.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. Young lady, you had, you went to high school. Can you sit over there and pull the mic over to you.

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10

Please, tell me your name and how old are you, if you don't mind.

11

12

TYESE EDWARDS: My name is Tyese

Edwards. I'm 14 years old.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. And you went to high school, is that correct? What high school did you go to?

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17

TYESE EDWARDS: The Urban Assembly of Business for Young Women.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. And then you were informed that you had to go back to junior high school after you started high school?

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TYESE EDWARDS: Yes.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: How was that to you? How did you feel? Or what did you say to yourself? What did you say to your mom? Did you cry or what?

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2 TYESE EDWARDS: I was depressed
3 that I wasn't in school for a few days, after I
4 heard that I had to go back to middle school. I,
5 I didn't feel like I wanted to repeat the grade,
6 after I had passed my classes and everything. So
7 I felt like it was unfair that I had to repeat the
8 grade again. Well, not again, like, over.

9 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: And so your
10 mom is trying to get you to, to enter high school.

11 TYESE EDWARDS: Yeah.

12 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: And you got a
13 letter saying that, "Yes, you can go to high
14 school," and then your mother said that they got a
15 phone call later saying, "No, you can't go." It
16 seems as though based on what was described by
17 your mother, you know, that, the left hand doesn't
18 know what the right hand is doing. And that the
19 whole system is like in chaos. I'm not trying to
20 put words in your mouth, but what do you think?

21 [laughter]

22 TYESE EDWARDS: Hm. I think it's,
23 that's crazy, 'cause they said that I could go to
24 the ninth grade, and then that same day they said
25 I couldn't. I didn't, I don't understand.

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2 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: And are you
3 in school now? No. That's not good, you know
4 that, right? Well, I, well, we've asked Jan
5 Atwell, our Policy Analyst to get you information,
6 and I'm going to work with your mother and SOS to
7 try to get you in school. That's where you
8 belong. [applause] I want to thank SOS and CEJ
9 and the parents that came in to give testimony,
10 because obviously the people that testified
11 earlier, the Deputy Chancellor, the Director, the
12 Assistant Director for Mr. Jo--Jonas, Mr. Jonas
13 has children in school also in the public school
14 system. But the bottom line is that it's people
15 like you that are parents, with children in the
16 system that we want to hear from, in order to give
17 a realistic view, on the ground, as to where we
18 stand. And you know, we had asked questions
19 earlier about the achievement gaps, between blacks
20 and whites, and between Hispanics and whites. And
21 you heard your Borough President, you live in The
22 Bronx, right?

23 MICHELINE EDWARDS: Yes.

24 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: You heard
25 your Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr., give

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2 testimony and gave the statistics as far as
3 English language learner students. And the
4 terrible statistics. And so that clearly shows
5 that we're in a crisis. And I believe you all
6 agree that we're in an educational crisis. Is
7 that correct?

8

PANEL: Yes.

9

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Well, let me
10 thank you all for coming in, representing
11 yourselves, representing your children,
12 representing SOS and CEJ, and young lady, thank
13 you for coming in with your mother. We're going
14 to try the best we can to help you in your
15 educational academic achievement, okay?

16

TYESE EDWARDS: Thank you.

17

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you
18 very much. For the record, we received testimony
19 from Luisa Ponce [phonetic] a parent, and for the
20 record, we received testimony from Esperanza
21 Vasquez [phonetic], a parent leader of New
22 Settlement Apartments Parent Action Committee, and
23 the New York City Coalition for Educational
24 Justice. And next we're going to hear from Leonie
25 Haimson of Class Size Matter, and Lisa Dolan--

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LISA DONLAN: Donlan.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: --Donlan, of CE--CEC 1, member, and Donald Friedman, Time Out for Testing. Please come forward.

[background noise]

LEONIE HAIMSON: Hi, I'm going to go first and be very brief 'cause my husband is leaving the country in 45 minutes, and if I don't get home he's going to kill me.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: No, we don't want that to happen. [laughter]

LEONIE HAIMSON: My name is Leonie Haimson, I'm Executive Director of Class Size Matters. Thank you so much for staying with us and holding these important hearing. I just wanted to make three very quick points, that the presentation that the DOE's made, showing rising scale scores on the State test scores is completely unreliable because as we all know, the State tests have gotten easier over time. So there's no way you can look at any evidence from the State test scores for any evidence of improving achievement. You have to look at the NAEPs. And as people have said already, the, the

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2 progress in New York City on the NAEPs has been
3 very, very slim. I want to look at specifically
4 how our black students have done, our Hispanic
5 students, our poor students, and our non-poor
6 students. And I looked at those separate
7 subgroups, and I looked at where New York City
8 stands now, in comparison with other cities,
9 across the country, as, and compared to where they
10 stood in 2003, when Joe Klein first implemented
11 his policies. The relative ranking of New York
12 City black students fell in every grade and
13 subject tested, between 2003 and 2009, compared to
14 other large cities. In fourth grade math, they
15 were in second place in 2003; they fell to third
16 place. In fourth grade reading, they were tied
17 for third place and fallen to fourth. In eighth
18 grade math, they were in third place and fell to
19 fifth. And they were in second place in, in
20 eighth grade reading, and fallen back to third.
21 Similarly, Hispanic, New York City Hispanic
22 students have fallen in every single category
23 compared to the rest of the nation. In fourth
24 grade math, they were tied for third, they fell to
25 fourth. In fourth grade reading, they were in

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2 first place in 2003, now they're in third. In
3 eighth grade math, we were in third place, they
4 fell to seventh place. In eighth grade reading,
5 they were in second place and fell to sixth place.
6 Now, Suransky claims great progress for low income
7 students, but the reality is different. Our free
8 lunch students already ranked number one in their
9 average NAEP scores in 2003, but had fallen behind
10 in three categories out of four by 2009. And for
11 non-poor students, New York City has by far the
12 worst record of any City in the nation, in terms
13 of their average scale scores on the NAEPs. In
14 fact, New York City is the only city in the entire
15 nation where our scores of non-poor students are
16 lower now than they were in 2003. The only city
17 in the country tested on the NAEPs. Now they talk
18 a lot about their graduation rates and some of the
19 problems with that have been explained here today.
20 But not all of them. High school staff still
21 score their own Regents and the practice of
22 scrubbing to raise those scores and principal
23 changing those scores is not only allowed, openly
24 allowed, but encouraged by DOE. Practice of
25 credit recovery, we've talked about that, that is

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2 a severe threat to the quality of education, more
3 so than anything else that's happening right now
4 in the City, more so than the dumbing down of the
5 State tests. Now high schools are becoming
6 diploma mills. And this is why I wanted to make
7 the point that I believe graduation rates are
8 going to go up, not down, because they are fixed.
9 The actual level of achievement in this City is
10 going down, but the graduation rates are going to
11 go up, because the Regents are fixed and because
12 credit recovery is inflating very, very, you know,
13 low performing schools that have had graduation
14 rates of under 50 percent, they're going to go up
15 to 75 percent or more. Because of credit
16 recovery, and because not all the kids who are
17 discharged, which is the last part of my
18 statement, we're still seeing incredible numbers
19 of kids discharged from high school. So, I just
20 wanted to emphasize that the lesson of this is
21 that test based accountability systems do not work
22 to improve achievement. Even though at this very
23 moment that you were holding these, these
24 hearings, our Mayor was on national television
25 saying what a great success we're having. And the

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2 Gates Foundation and NBC and - - Foundation are
3 holding up these sorts of policies for the entire
4 nation to emulate, and in fact imposing on the
5 rest of the country these kinds of policies, even
6 though parents and teachers don't want them. So,
7 thank you very much, and you can check out my full
8 testimony, but thank you again.

9 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Well, thank
10 you, and get home, I don't want your husband
11 [laughter] we need you as an advocate in
12 education, we thank you for your stats. And I
13 guess time will tell on whether or not the
14 graduation rates increase or decrease, but clearly
15 credit recovery is a huge factor in helping kids
16 to graduate from high school. And hopefully, I
17 think that you're wrong, I think that test scores,
18 or graduation rates are going to go down. But you
19 know one thing, I've been wrong before.

20 LEONIE HAIMSON: Let's make a bet.

21 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: So we'll make
22 a bet.

23 LISA DONLAN: Yeah, right, public,
24 public bet.

25 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you

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very much. Okay, next please.

LISA DONLAN: Yeah, hi, I'm Lisa Donlan, I'm the President of CEC 1, which is the Lower East Side and East Village of Manhattan. I'll try and make this quick, because I do appreciate that you're staying. And I'd like to thank the Committee and Chair Jackson for once again holding hearings that allow the public and our elected representatives to question the DOE. Because as you know, that's not something we get very much chance to do. And as you also know, from this testing debacle, it's very clear that under Mayoral control, there really is no accountability. I've been to plenty of hearings that look actually just like this by the time I speak, and we know over and over again that nothing changes. And there are never any consequences to the people who make the decisions and the policies. Today we learned, for instance that the DOE has no plan to address the systemic failure that they've created over the last eight years, and their failure to provide a quality education to all children. They have no plan to create equitable access to quality schools, they

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2 have no plan to close the achievement gap, they
3 have no plan to support the students and the
4 families and the schools that have been failed by
5 the system that they've created. And they have no
6 plan to create an assessment that actually
7 measures real teaching and learning. The only
8 plan we heard is the usual passing of the
9 accountability buck. That's right, passing it
10 back to the schools, to the teachers, and even to
11 the students and their families. While we also
12 increase class size and cut their budgets. So,
13 for this simple reason, I have prepared a
14 resolution, a sample resolution that I would love
15 to present to this Committee and perhaps this
16 Committee could present it on to the rest of the
17 City Council, and that I will be working with to
18 pass on to for consideration to see CECs, PTAs,
19 SLTs and other parent bodies, where I'll go into
20 my demands in a second, but I just really want to
21 say that if we don't change the carrots and the
22 sticks, nothing will change. We have to remember
23 the definition of insanity, I think that's what
24 we're experiencing here, collective mass insanity.
25 We keep doing the same things over and over and

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2 somehow we keep thinking that we're going to get
3 to a different income, outcome, I'm sorry. And
4 really we are seeing more of the same. And I
5 would just put to you that the status quo, the
6 status quo right now is this Administration. We
7 have not made the progress they've been crowing
8 about. So basically in the resolution I ask for
9 just a few things. That we provide immediate and
10 massive academic intervention to the students who
11 are labeled failings, that's the Is and the IIs in
12 our high school students. That we support
13 struggling schools by providing real support in
14 the form of extra resources. One of those of
15 course would be the very important lowered class
16 sizes, that's essential. I also, I'm asking that
17 we suspend all high stakes standardized test based
18 policies and decisions, and that instead we create
19 a holistic, comprehensive measure of teaching and
20 learning that is based on multiple measures, that
21 has been approved by parents, teachers,
22 administrators and education experts this time
23 around. Thank you very much.

24 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Well, thank
25 you, and we're glad to have that resolution to

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2 take a look at.

3 LISA DONLAN: Yes, you have it.

4 You should.

5 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Next, please.

6 DONALD FREEMAN: Yeah, good
7 evening, my name is Donald Freeman, I'm from Time
8 Out For Testing. I'm also a retired New York City
9 high school principal, which puts me in a very
10 strange place in terms of Shael Suransky and Josh
11 Thomases, whom I actually know quite well. And I
12 have major issues with some of the things they
13 said today, undoubtedly. I'm also by the way a
14 member of SOS. You heard a lot of inflated talk
15 today, about inflated test scores. Dan Koretz
16 does a study, he's a Harvard professors, and what
17 does he come up with? Tons of inflation. Leonie
18 used the word "unreliable." That's the kind word,
19 these tests are worthless. They are unreliable to
20 the point we can depend on them for nothing. And
21 you're hearing from these poor kids about the fact
22 that they're being held back, they can't go to
23 high school because of worthless tests. I don't
24 know what to do about it, but I have to tell you
25 it's very frustrating to hear it. Professional

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2 ethics in the testing industry. Standardized
3 tests should never be used to make high stakes
4 decisions, ignored by the DOE, ignored by the SED.
5 These kids took a high stakes test, they were left
6 back, despite the fact they have portfolios, that
7 in all likelihood showed they should've been
8 promoted, which is why they sent them to high
9 school to begin with. City Council Weprin, his
10 kids have been hurt by the tests. Suransky
11 answers, "Well, we're developing much more complex
12 assessments." I'm going to give Shale his due,
13 they are. But until you get rid of the high
14 stakes test at the end, you've accomplished
15 nothing. As a principal, I will tell you if I had
16 that burden, I'd be telling my teachers to teach
17 to the test. So that hasn't disappeared. So
18 Shale can do anything he wants in terms of
19 developing assessments, you don't get rid of the
20 high stakes nature, nothing changes. I want to
21 support what Leonie said about the, the NAEP. I
22 believe that Josh said that New York City
23 outperformed all the other large cities in the
24 country. That's blatantly untrue. I have the
25 feeling at that point Josh was just nervous and

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2 needed to say something, but that's not real at
3 all, so let's get that off the table. What should
4 assessments look like? I go to Mike Mulgrew,
5 multiple measures. We need to have a look at the
6 quality, the level of the materials the kids are
7 reading, we need to look at the kinds of things
8 they're writing, you need to look at their ability
9 to research and the quality of that. We need to
10 look at the math projects they're doing. We also
11 need to have a look at the kinds of science
12 experiments they're doing, that kind of stuff, the
13 in-depth work that comes out of a classroom, and
14 then add on to that a standardized test as a minor
15 part of that to inform the rest of it. I also
16 want to go back to one thing, and I promise I'll
17 be quick on this, 'cause everybody's probably
18 dying and want to go to sleep. [laughs]
19 Including Robert Jackson and Don Freeman. The fix
20 is in on the Regents Exams. The fix is on the
21 three day tests. Why? Because they are now
22 setting the cut scores after the kids take the
23 tests. That's a no-brainer. I want to make sure
24 all the kids pass, and everybody does really
25 poorly, I just set a lower cut score. That's how

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2 this game is now being played. And that's how we
3 ended up with grade inflation. My good friend,
4 and I do mean this literally, Ruben Diaz, actually
5 put out a document that shows that what they kept
6 on doing is dropping the cut scores. Well,
7 they're doing--p

8 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Dropping the

9 - -

10 DONALD FREEMAN: Yeah, they're
11 dropping them and dropping them and dropping them,
12 and looking better and better and better. Sal
13 Stern wrote an excellent article where he talks
14 about Rick Mills actually making a unilateral
15 decision to drop cut scores and then going out to
16 the press and saying, "Look how well we did."
17 This should be a wakeup call for all of us, this
18 is dangerous stuff, hurting our children, hurting
19 our teachers, destroying our schools. And I thank
20 you for your patience in listening to me.

21 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: So, Dan, what
22 do you, what do we do about it? What, when I say
23 "we," you as advocates, you're here, you sat
24 through an entire hearing, you're testifying,
25 parents came to testify, you heard City Council

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2 Members ask questions, responses. What do we do
3 about it?

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DONALD FREEMAN: I think one of the
5 first things we need to do is get the word out,
6 and you can certainly help us do that, along with
7 other Council Members. I was amazed at the unity
8 today that I heard here. Word needs to get out
9 about the games being played. I also think we
10 need to get back to the State Legislature, and we
11 need to have a conversation with them about
12 getting rid of Mayoral control, which has been a
13 total fraud. It's, it's a stacked deck.

14

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Now you said
15 that you're a retired principal.

16

DONALD FREEMAN: I'm a retired New
17 York City high school principal.

18

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: You're here
19 also representing Time Out for Testing.

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DONALD FREEMAN: I'm representing
21 Time Out for Testing and also SOS.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: SOS. My
23 question to you is that if in fact you were an
24 active principal, would you be here today saying
25 the same things you're saying now?

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2 DONALD FREEMAN: I might be crazy
3 enough to do that. [laughter] Okay? I mean,
4 I've taken on the State Education Department as a
5 principal in the past, not the DOE. So, yeah, I
6 probably would.

7 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Yeah, as you-

8 -

9 DONALD FREEMAN: Oh, but you know
10 what, very few would.

11 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Yeah, I think
12 that you and--you preface your response, if you
13 were crazy enough, you probably would be here.

14 DONALD FREEMAN: Yeah, no, I took
15 on the SED on a number of occasions.

16 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Good. Well,
17 let me thank you both for staying the course,
18 listening to the questions and answers and, and
19 giving your testimony which is very, very
20 important to us overall, because then listening to
21 your testimonies, then we know that we're not
22 crazy. [laughter]

23 DONALD FREEMAN: You're not.

24 [laughs]

25 LISA DONLAN: You have our

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2 gratitude.

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DONALD FREEMAN: Thank you very
much.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.
Next panel is Susan Crawford, the Right to Read
Project; Mona Davitz, New York Charter Parents
Association, is she here? No? Okay. Who? David
Debusse, from--

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DAVID DEBUSE: Tilat, Tilat
[phonetic].

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Tilat. Come
on up. And Everett, hey, Everett, my, my
constituent is here. And Rodney D., come on.
[background noise] Everybody else come up,
there's not--right where? Okay, Rodney, come on
up, please. Coalition for Public Education.
Whoever wants to testify, please come up. You're
the last but not least panel. And I'm going to
give you my undivided attention. Just like I gave
everyone else. So, ladies first.

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[background noise]

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SUSAN CRAWFORD: Good evening, I
believe it is.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Not afternoon

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2 any more.

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SUSAN CRAWFORD: [laughs] Okay.

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And thank you for staying the course, as well. My

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testimony is essentially some notes I wrote and

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email to Jan this morning, hoping you might see

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them before the DOE testified.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Just identify

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yourself for the record and - - please.

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SUSAN CRAWFORD: Sorry. Susan

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Crawford, District Three parent, also founder of

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the Right to Read Project. And so, you'll have

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that to look at on paper. The only thing I

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especially want to call to mind while it's all

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fresh in our minds, is it's my understanding

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there's supposed to be something called a

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"promotion in doubt" letter, sent to students at

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the end of January, if they are in danger of being

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held back. And it's my understanding if they

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never receive that letter, that no test should get

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in the way of the fact that they were doing well

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enough in school through the end of January to not

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have gotten a promotion in doubt letter. And I

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just stopped, I forget, Tyree, Tyese, I'm not, I

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can't, Tyese. I stopped her mother outside and I

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2 said, if you, if she never got a promotion in
3 doubt letter, I'm not sure this is even legal.
4 But we need to find out what the legal standing
5 is. I'm going back in history on that. And so
6 you'll have the rest of what I had written this
7 morning on, on paper. I just want to respond to
8 testimony as I heard it today, just briefly, a few
9 things. Steve Koss [phonetic], who works with
10 Leonie on the Parent Blog, just did some, crunched
11 numbers and came out with some figure like only
12 two percent of students are passing, are getting
13 that algebra score that they're saying students
14 need to do well in high school, in college. And I
15 would just say, until this DOE comes up with a
16 different math curriculum, you're never going to
17 see good math scores. It's a dreadful math
18 curriculum. And if instead of going through all
19 these gyrations every year or two, they simply
20 looked at the 209 schools they gave a waiver to,
21 and emulated their curricula, we wouldn't be
22 having this problem. Why was it decided to give a
23 dumbed down curriculum to all those other schools?
24 And that's a question that CPE and CEJ are now
25 asking, and they're right to ask and they should

1
2 demand that they have the same curriculum, there's
3 no reason that they shouldn't. Another way to
4 come at this whole issue of the students being
5 held back is that under Section 504, it is the
6 school's responsibility if a child is struggling
7 to come forward and say, "You need help, you need
8 to get the help, we need to give you the help."
9 And for the State to give a waiver to schools and
10 say, "You don't have to help them," is completely
11 inappropriate and also probably illegal. And I, I
12 just want to point out that I believe it was, oh,
13 it was Mr. Schwartz saying he wanted to focus, the
14 State wanted to focus on interventions at
15 chronically low achieving schools, but not on the
16 chronically low achieving students. I mean, those
17 are my words. And that unless and until people,
18 the academic intervention services are targeted to
19 student beyond 37-and-a-half minutes a week, we
20 will not see any change in these test scores.

21 Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you,
23 Susan. Next, please.

24 RODNEY DEES: Good afternoon,
25 Councilman, Chairman Jackson. My name is--

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Good evening.

RODNEY DEES: Good evening, right?

My name is Rodney Dees [phonetic], I've been at these Council hearings before. Under full disclosure, Jan Atwell trained me, 'cause I want to make sure that's clear.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay.

RODNEY DEES: And I think that she did a fine job. I represent parents who couldn't be here today, for various reasons, as you know. At this time of day, parents are running around, taking care of their children, and they can't speak, but I'm willing to speak on their behalf. And I will support the speakers and the parents earlier who spoke about the, the, this scandal, I call it a scandal, with the test scores. And really appreciate the Council for having this hearing. And briefly, I want, I want to get straight to like what's--I've been noticing for eight years that this has been going on, this criminal behavior, and the City Council, I want to step it up, I want the City Council Members who might be hearing this testimony. And for eight years I've been looking at the City Council and

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2 you've given this Mayor, Mayoral control, and I'm,
3 this is critical emergency right now, and I'm
4 looking at the City Council, they must stop
5 playing games with the Mayor. I'm asking the City
6 Council, stop playing games with the Mayor on
7 this. And this is destroying families and
8 children. And this is really preventing, you
9 know, a good future for our children. And parents
10 do have a right to appeal this. So, I'm asking
11 again that, you know, the, the Council Members who
12 are not here, be, let it be known that I'm looking
13 at the dysfunction at the City Council level,
14 where the heat is not really turned up on the
15 Mayor, and you're letting the Mayor get away with
16 too much of this. It's been going on for too
17 long, and it's criminal behavior. Period, point
18 blank, that's my opinion, and that's speaking from
19 the parents who never get a chance to be heard.
20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Well, thank
22 you, representing yourself and parents that never
23 get an opportunity to be heard. Next.

24 EVERETT STEMBRIDGE: Okay.

25 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: But not

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least.

EVERETT STEMBRIDGE: Okay. My name is Everett Stembridge [phonetic], and yes, I, a constituent of Robert Jackson, I live in, in Harlem. But I'm also an educator, I'm a parent, I'm an advocate, I've worked as an administrator and as a teacher. And I'm currently in court with the New York City Department of Education. I needed, I felt very compelled to speak because, you know, I grew up in Harlem and I grew up in poverty, and I'm sure as most of, most of you know, it was my education that helped propel me forward. And I was shocked that so many people, leaders, and folks that are responsible for educating our children has allowed the Mayor and the Chancellor to put up this fallacy of student excellence. And, and that this has to be one of the greatest travesties in, in the history of, of this State, in terms of education. And it's not, it doesn't appear as though anyone is taking it seriously. You know, I listened to The Bronx Borough President, and he had some very interesting things to say about holding them accountable, but it, it appears as though we, we

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2 can't hold them accountable, we really don't have
3 any power to do anything. And, and I'm hoping
4 that that's not true, because it means that, I
5 think for eight years, we said that children
6 achieved a level of performance that they didn't
7 achieve. And, and so, not only was the, the
8 students bamboozled, but we were also taken,
9 millions and millions of dollars of, of taxpayers'
10 money, for programs that were supposed to have
11 resorted, resulted in student learning that
12 actually didn't. And the reason it didn't occur,
13 and then this is just basic common sense: you
14 cannot improve performance by lowering standards.
15 You improve performance by having high
16 expectations and maintaining those expectations,
17 and then teaching children how to reach them,
18 whether it's through extra help, whether it's
19 through remediation, whether it's through many,
20 many other methods. But, if the target itself is
21 not real, then that means that we spent, and I
22 don't know offhand, but I believe that the
23 educational budget is, is close to a billion
24 dollars, I believe, and--

25 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: \$22 billion.

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2 EVERETT STEMBRIDGE: Wow. And, and
3 so that means you multiply that by eight, and, and
4 so why are we so comfortable with allowing them to
5 just come out and say, "No, we lied, and, and we
6 were preparing these kids to fail." You know, it,
7 it's a civil rights issue. You know? And, and
8 when you look at the kids who are doing worse,
9 it's the black and Latino kids and, and my right,
10 I can't sit and not say anything, and, and not
11 speak out. And I don't think enough is being done
12 about it. And it, we need to do something very
13 quickly. And, I'm just going to, I'm going to end
14 on that note, because I mean, I could go on and on
15 and on, but I, the thing I want to get across very
16 clearly, is, is the fact that, you know, the, it
17 is, it's, it's a horror story, it's a travesty,
18 it's--it needs to be communicated that way. I
19 don't, I don't see, you know, I don't, it doesn't
20 take rocket science to understand that if, you
21 know, if you, you put the bar down and say, "Okay,
22 in order to be successful, just step over the
23 bar." And everybody just steps over the bar. And
24 then you know, I heard some parents talking about
25 it, and that's very hurtful, you know, how well

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2 their kids thought they had done, and they hadn't
3 really achieved that type of accomplishment. So,
4 we really need to bring the hammer down on them,
5 or they need to accept responsibility for it and
6 stop grandstanding and boasting about the success
7 that they have achieved, which is, is unrealistic,
8 and they're doing it off the backs of our children
9 and the taxpayers of the City of New York. Thank
10 you.

11 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Well, let me
12 thank all three of you for coming in. But in
13 response, I think that this Committee, the City
14 Council Education Committee, even though we cannot
15 make the Mayor or make the Chancellor do anything,
16 we can hold oversight hearings. We can ask them
17 tough questions and get their responses, we can
18 follow up in writing. As I think someone said
19 earlier, I think it was the Borough President of
20 The Bronx, that Suzi Oppenheimer, the Chair of the
21 New York State Senate Education Committee, is
22 going to be holding hearings on this. And also,
23 then maybe Cathy Nolan, Assembly Member that's the
24 Chair of the Education Committee in the State
25 Assembly, she may hold a joint committee hearing,

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2 or may hold a separate committee hearing. I think
3 clearly, as someone said earlier, and Lisa, I
4 mean, that--Lisa, right? Not Lisa.

5 FEMALE VOICE: Leonie?

6 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: No, you.
7 Susan. You or somebody else said that the Mayor
8 had, today, at a press conference, tooting the
9 progress of New York City, and their education
10 achievement. But if the cameras were focused on
11 this Committee, they would tell a different story.
12 And so you do have, you had some several reporters
13 here, you had some cameras here, and I hope that
14 they will share the message, I hope that people
15 will write about it, that people will watch WN--
16 and New York City TV, or the Senate Channel,
17 whoever's broadcasting this, so they can see
18 really the perspective on this particular issue.
19 And especially where children have gone on to high
20 school and now they're going back to junior high
21 school. That's heartbreaking. That's why I asked
22 her, you know, I mean, I guess I may have been
23 crying if I was a student. Now, you're, you know,
24 you're graduating, you're feeling good about
25 yourself, and you're off to high school, and then

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2 they say, "Uh, uh, uh," like - - "Don't come
3 here." That you're going back to a complete, not-
4 -to, to do over the eighth grade because you
5 didn't pass a standardized test. That leave a lot
6 to be desire.

7 EVERETT STEMBRIDGE: It's criminal,
8 it's criminal.

9 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: So on behalf
10 of the entire Education Committee, Aysha Schomberg
11 to my left is the Counsel, Jan Atwell is the
12 Legislative Policy Analyst, Joan Pavolny who was
13 here earlier, and Regina Poreda-Ryan, she's our
14 finance person, she's our point person as far as
15 finance, and Shirley Limongi is our Press Officer,
16 we thank everyone and thank the New York State
17 Senate for allowing us to use this room.

18 Obviously, the City Council is in great needs now,
19 and as you know, City Hall is being rehabbed. And
20 we're out of there for at least a year, hopefully
21 we'll get back within a year. And so we have to
22 ask our colleagues at the State level to use their
23 room. Because clearly the importance of this
24 hearing today, with the hearing room that we have
25 on the 16th floor and the 14th floor, even combined

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would not have been enough. So, with that, thank
you all for Sergeant-of-Arms and the cameraman and
everyone else who participated in the hearing
today, and we're closing this hearing at 6:32 p.m.

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[gavel]

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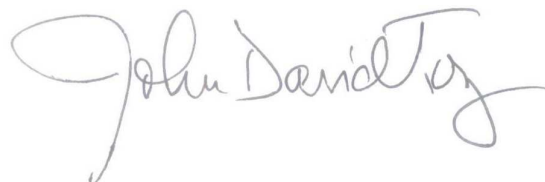
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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, JOHN DAVID TONG certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John David Tong". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Signature_____

Date October 22, 2010